

ISSUE #46
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HEAVEN'S METAL[®]

S Michael SWEET

IMAGINE THIS



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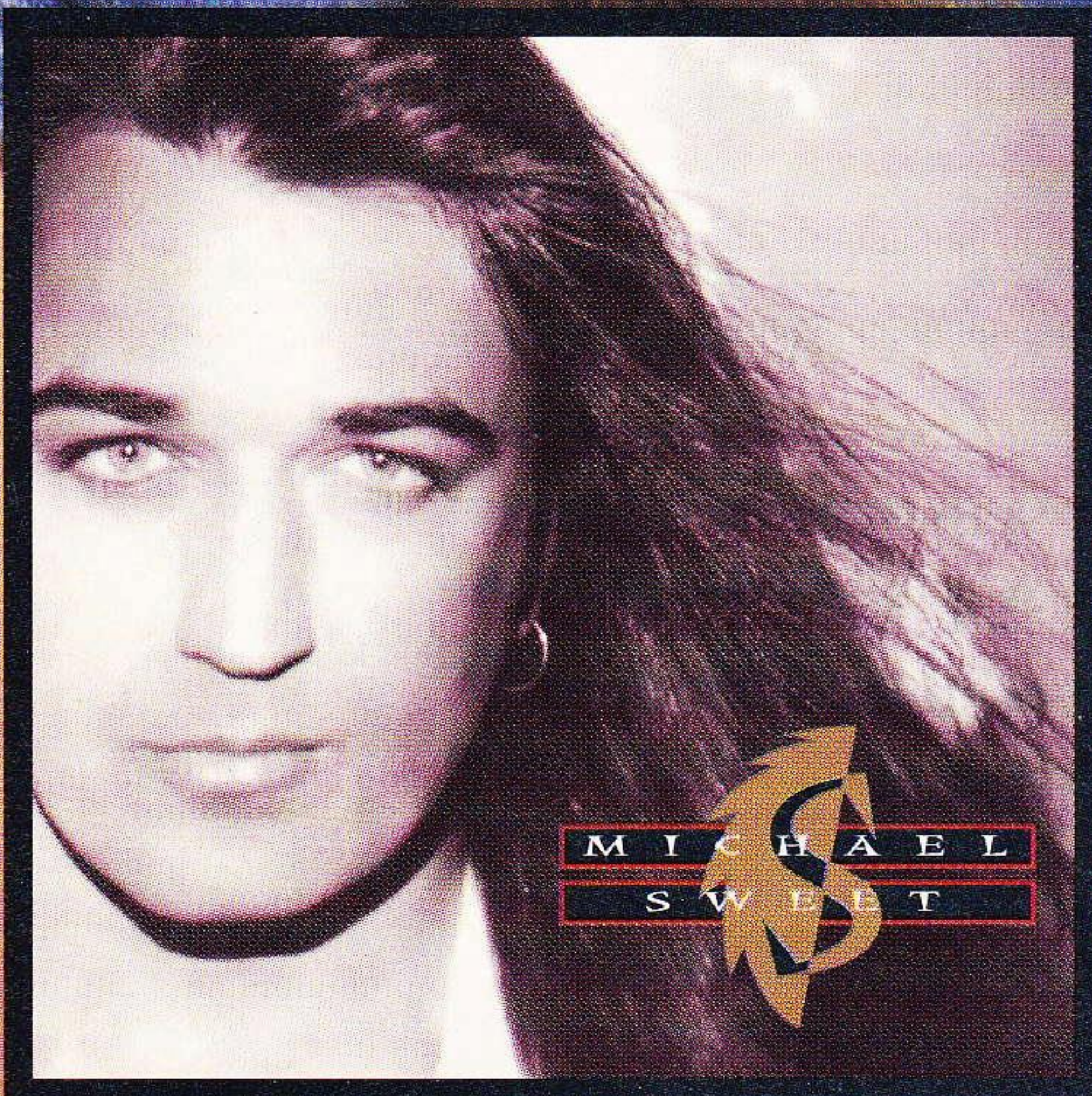
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HEAVEN'S METAL

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Scripture

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean." (Matthew 23:25, 26)

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by
Jeff
Swenson

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How Sweet It Is

By Dave Muttillo

It's been two years since Michael Sweet's surprising departure from Stryper. After the shockwaves subsided, Michael practically dropped out of sight. Now he is back with a new album, a new band, new videos and an upcoming tour. Heaven's Metal caught up with Michael to let you know what's going on.

WHEN YOU LEFT STRYPER, YOU SAID, BASICALLY, THAT IT WAS TO PURSUE A MELLOWER DIRECTION.

"That was one of the many reasons," answers Michael. "The number one reason is that I felt there was no need for me to stay there any longer and it was definitely time to move on. I felt like Stryper had had its time and God did incredible things with the group...but it's a new day. I also felt that, from the whole musical side, I don't know if that it's I'm getting old -- I doubt that's the reason -- musically I changed a whole lot from the beginning of Stryper to the end of Stryper. I haven't turned into Michael Bolton or anything, but it's definitely a bit mellow. I wouldn't term it hard rock or heavy metal, but it rocks. It's powerful stuff."

WHAT LED TO THIS MELLOWER DIRECTION; ASIDE FROM THE AGE IDEA?

"I don't really have the answer to that. I've done a lot of experimenting with my writing. I've just changed as a writer. If I were to try to sit down and try to write an old style Stryper song, I couldn't do it. I'm sure age has a part to play in that."

YOU COMMENTED THAT STRYPER HAS HAD ITS TIME. WHAT LED YOU TO THAT CONCLUSION?

"A lot of people would be quick to jump on the money thing. 'Oh, money led him to that conclusion. They weren't making as much money when he left.' Now, that's true. Stryper went up, up, up, up and down, down, down, down; but that's not why I left. We had our day, just like a lot of other groups out there. Some groups never leave, some come back. I felt the need to move on. And, maybe in the future, there might be a reunion or we'll get back and do another record or two. I don't know. I'm not close minded to that and I'm very open to that."

AFTER YOU LEFT STRYPER YOU CUT A SIX-SONG DEMO WITH SOME HEAVIER SONGS, LIKE



"LOVE YOU CRAZY," "MAKE SOMEONE'S LIFE BETTER TODAY," AND "KEEP THE DREAM ALIVE." WHAT HAPPENED TO THOSE SONGS?

"Well, they're still on D.A.T. tape here at my house. Those are songs that can be pulled out and maybe used later on -- if not by myself, maybe for a Stryper reunion. They don't fit musically with what I'm doing on my solo record. They're definitely more hard edged. That was part of the experimenting I was talking about. I went through all this heavy stuff and then I went through some really light stuff, much lighter than what's on this record, like full-on orchestrations with no drums, no bass guitar, no electric guitar whatsoever (on "I Need You Now") and I realized that that's not really what I wanted to do."

SO, HOW MANY SONGS DID YOU ACTUALLY DO THAT DIDN'T MAKE THE ALBUM?

"About 14 songs. Many of those will re-surface. 'Love You Crazy' I'm sure will, 'cause I had a lot of good response on that one. There are some ballads that'll

resurface."

WE'VE TALKED ABOUT YOU WANTING TO "DO YOUR OWN THING." SOME MIGHT FEEL THAT, IN "DOING YOUR OWN THING," YOU BASICALLY PUT AN END TO TWO VIABLE MINISTRIES IN STRYPER AND SURRENDER, BY TAKING THEIR DRUMMER, JAMIE WOLLAM. HOW WOULD YOU DEFEND YOURSELF IN THAT?

"Before I even met him (Jamie), he was planning on leaving the group. Then we played a gig together at a homeless benefit concert and that's when we met for the first time. At that point, I was thinking about leaving Stryper. We got to talking and we hit it off. Then I left Stryper. He played on the 'Love You Crazy' demo and it just worked out. But, before he'd even met me, he'd decided he was gonna leave the band."

WHY DID YOU USE A DRUM MACHINE ON THE NEW ALBUM?

"Well, a number of reasons. We

didn't have much time for rehearsal. We got together for rehearsal with Jamie (Wollam) -- and Jamie's an incredible drummer -- but all the drum patterns were programmed from demos that I had done for eight of the ten songs. The rehearsal's weren't going too good and, since I had all this stuff programmed anyways, and since I was such a big fan of the Adams record and the Don Henley record -- which is all drum machine too -- I just figured, 'Heck, I'm just gonna go for this and do it that way, because that's kind of what I'm shooting for.' That's the way I did it."

IT'S QUITE A CHANGE FROM HAVING ROBERT SWEET BEHIND YOU.

"Rob's an incredible drummer. He plays a lot. He throws in a lot of stuff, and that's what makes him so impressive to hear. He's doin' so much, throwing in fills all over the place. For the *Michael Sweet* record I just wanted a more straight-ahead approach, very simple, very solid; that's why there's not a lot of fills. There's just 'Dunt-dunt-dunt,' ya know, lots of building, straight-ahead fills. That's just pretty much what I wanted for this record."

WE'RE DOING AN INTERVIEW IN THIS ISSUE WITH ROB HALFORD OF FIGHT, WHO MENTIONED STRYPER.

"We met him on a couple of occasions. He got up and jammed with us in Canada. We closed the show with 'Breakin' The Law' and he sang. It was real cool. He was into it, and we were rockin.'"

REGARDING THE CONTRACT WITH BENSON, I HEARD YOU WERE TALKING WITH A NUMBER OF LABELS. HOW DID YOU END UP WHERE YOU DID?

"I talked with a number of labels that were interested. And I wasn't happy with them, because of what they wanted to put into it just wasn't pleasing to me. I definitely wanted a label who was really going to get behind it and put the right amount of money into it to do it right. So, it was difficult to find a company that believed that much in it, due to the fact that I came from a band that basically had a black cloud over it for the last three years. I got fed up with it and I prayed to God drivin' home on the freeway here in L.A., 'Just close all the doors and lead me to that one door,' and it just happened to be Benson. All the doors seemed to close and the only one that was open was Benson. I knew at that point that was where God wanted me. Why, I don't know, but that's

where He wanted me and that's where I went."

WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN WITH YOUR RECORD OUTSIDE OF THE CHRISTIAN MARKET?

"Right now there is a company, a major label, being spoken to who's really interested in the record. They're talking to Benson about doing a deal with them to distribute and promote it. That's going on as we speak. My manager is in New York right now meeting with the people. As soon as that does happen they'll take care of the whole secular side of things."

WITH THAT IN MIND, WHAT ARE YOUR CAREER GOALS NOW?

"Just to show the world where I'm coming from as a person -- musically, spiritually -- just show them who Michael Sweet is. To go out there and try to reach people and hope that they enjoy my music and that they get something from it. I just hope that many people are touched."

YOU SEEM TO BE PUTTING AN EMPHASIS ON THE SPIRITUAL, WHERE ARE YOU AT NOW SPIRITUALLY?

"I am definitely far beyond where I was a year ago, but I'm far behind where I wanna be a year from now. I'm always wanting to be a better Christian and be closer to God, but living in this world it's really tough, because you're faced with things that make you angry, bring you down, make you sad and it's tough to let go and let God. But, that's what I want to do. I wanna let God rule my life. I'm not there yet, but someday I will be."

SO, WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO BECOME A BETTER CHRISTIAN?

"One thing that I've been doing the last two years is going to church a lot. I've been going to church more than I've gone in my entire life. Once, twice, sometimes three times a week. I developed a real good relationship with my pastor -- Raul. There's a bond there and that's really helped me through a lot of things. I'm not reading my Bible as much as I should, but I'm reading it a lot more than I did in the past. I'm not a big reader. I never have been. It kinda hinders me in my Bible reading time, but I'm definitely doing more of it than I've ever done in the past."

OVER THE PAST EIGHT YEARS YOU'VE BEEN RAGGED ON AND BAGGED ON QUITE A BIT. HOW DOES THAT FEEL?

"I feel like, in many cases, people have just thrashed Stryper and put

Stryper through the rotors for no reason at all. We weren't perfect guys. Nobody is. I felt like many times people wanted or expected us to be and we weren't. I never will be. People expect the world of you, especially when you do what I do -- Christian performer -- and when you make a tiny little mistake, you're nailed. It's sad that it is that way, but unfortunately it is. Hopefully, things will change."

IF THAT REAPPEARS AGAIN NOW, AS YOU GO OUT WITH YOUR NEW ALBUM, WHAT WOULD BE DIFFERENT IN YOUR REACTION TO THAT SORT OF CRITICISM?

"I don't think I would rebel and take an angry attitude, like in the past, because that was just a phase -- not just from what we were going through from people attacking us, but also a growing phase. We were young and immature in a lot of ways, and angry and mad at the world and the slightest thing would set us off during that time. In the future I'd probably react in a more intelligent way and pray that God would be on my side and give me the answers to come back at them with."

LET'S TALK ABOUT YOUR NEW ALBUM. STYLISTICALLY, DESCRIBE THE ALBUM.

"There's a lot of influences in the album from people I admire, like Bryan Adams. I'm a big fan of his. I respect him a lot. There's definitely influence of that in certain songs. Style wise I would say it's a power pop guitar-oriented record with a positive message."

WHO ELSE HAS INFLUENCED YOU IN YOUR WRITING?

"I'm a big fan of Bon Jovi as well -- more in the old days. I'm really into that style of music. It's in between pop and hard rock. There's a rockin' edge to it, a hard edge, but it's not hard rock. Even back when I was in Stryper I was into that style. The guys would push for a heavier style and I liked doing the heavier stuff too, but I'd always push for the 'Honestly's and 'Calling On You's as well. That was my style. It's that guitar-oriented pop. That's me. That's what I'm into."

WHO'S INFLUENCED YOU AS A GUITARIST?

"Lot's of guys. Two of my main influences are Brian May (Queen) and Eddie Van Halen. Those are my two main influences."

WHAT ABOUT VOCALLY?

"Lately I'm into all types of

different vocalists. I'm into Mariah Carey, Whitney Houston, old Steve Perry, Lou Gramm from Foreigner, and Mickey Thomas from Jefferson Starship."

MOST PEOPLE HAVEN'T HEARD ANYTHING SINCE *Can't Stop The Rock*. A LOT OF YOUR FANS WERE METAL. WHAT KIND OF REACTION DO YOU EXPECT FROM THEM?

"That's a good question. I think the reaction's gonna be real good, 'cause I think not only have I changed and grown, but I think a lot of the fans have. I get a lot of letters from people saying they're not so much into metal these days. I think they're gonna react in a positive way to this record. There's still stuff on the record that will give the real hard edge people a little taste, things like 'Ain't No Safe Way' and 'I Think You Hear Me Knockin'' are hard rock that I think will take care of them."

THE SONG "J.E.S.U.S." IS A MUCH MORE OPEN STATEMENT OF YOUR FAITH THAN YOU'VE MADE IN YEARS. WHAT LED TO THAT?

"Exactly what you just said -- the fact that I haven't relayed that in a song for a long time. I felt the need to do that. That song almost wasn't on the record. It was recorded about two weeks before the record was finished. I cut two songs from the record and added 'J.E.S.U.S.' and 'Take Me Home.'"

"I haven't turned into Michael Bolton or anything, but it is definitely a bit mellower."

WHAT GOT CUT?

"A couple of songs that I don't even think they had names. That's the way I work. I go in to do a record and about 80% of the lyrics aren't finished. I always wait 'til the last minute to do the lyrics. I was still writing lyrics to them the day I had to sing them. It's the way I've always done things. It's crazy."

ACTUALLY, DO YOU THINK IT'S BETTER THAN OTHER ARTISTS WHO GET SO CONSUMED BY WHAT THEY'RE SAYING LYRICALLY



THAT THEIR MUSIC IS ALMOST...

"Yeah, you're right. I've always put a lot more focus on the music. It's always what comes first. I have songs on D.A.T. tapes that are completely finished and demoed without lyrics."

DO YOU THINK THE FACT THAT YOU'VE REALLY CONCENTRATED ON THE MUSIC HAS MADE YOU MORE SUCCESSFUL THAN OTHER CHRISTIAN ARTISTS?

"I think so, yeah. I'm not gonna brag, but if you look back to the Stryper days, a lot of doors were opened with Stryper because of the music. We really worked hard on the music and focused on it and I'm doing the same with this solo thing. A lot of Christian artists focus more on the spiritual side than on the musical side, like you said. That's sad. (Do I ever agree!)"

WHAT ABOUT A TOUR AND VIDEO TO GO ALONG WITH THE ALBUM?

"The video is finished. We shot three videos, an interview and some backstage footage. It's supposed to hit the stores soon. The tour's supposed to start in the middle of March, when the album comes out. I've got Jamie Wollam on drums and I'm talking to Dennis Cameron from Angelica about playing guitar, but that's not set in stone. And, for a bass player, I'm talking to Tracy Ferry (Seraiah

and Elektrik) and a guy named Scott Harper (Whitecross).

"The first single to Christian radio will be 'Someday.' Why? I don't know. For the secular market -- if this deal goes down -- probably 'Together,' maybe 'All This And Heaven Too,' and for sure the second single will be 'Tomorrow, Tonight.' I think that that's gonna be the single to break the album wide open -- if it's distributed secularly."

OZ, TIM, ROBERT. WHAT'S GOING ON WITH THEM?

"Oz, as far as I know, is working a 9 to 5 job. Not really pursuing music too much, from what I've heard. Basically, just putting all his time into strengthening his marriage. Timmy, from what I've heard last, is playing in a band with ex-members of Stormer. It's like a side thing he does. He plays in his church band and he's also talking with Robert about the new band Robert's putting together. And I heard last that they're doing it together. They have a new guitar player by the name of Michael Bailey and they're looking for a singer. It's gonna be a whole new band. It's not gonna be called Stryper -- a whole new name and a whole new thing. Style-wise I'm not sure what it's gonna be."

Well, there you have it, everything from the past to the present. From Mike and his new album and tour, to Oz, Timmy and Rob. What more can you ask for?

HM

Envision That -- Imagine This

By Dan MacIntosh



[l to r: Trey Hebert, Ahmed Montgomery, Daryl Youngblood, Tamri Hunt, Rick Weinland]

Not long ago, musical styles were strictly segregated by unspoken social rules. Remember when punks and metalheads wouldn't be caught dead together? Or when rap records (remember records?) were only purchased by African Americans? Kids from coast to coast and everywhere in between now watch 120 Minutes, Headbanger's Ball, and Yo MTV Raps on cable, and are less likely to become slaves to any particular musical style. In other words, anything goes.

Which brings us to Imagine This, which is a young metal...er, progressive...uh, pop...um, kinda funky band from Houston. This musically multi-lingual, multi-racial, and multi-talented group is a result of our recently desegregated musical climate.

And while anyone can take a wide variety of ingredients, add water, then throw them in a pot and call it soup; the real skill is the ability to make it hold together, and to have it make sense, and ultimately to end up with something worth serving. It is Daryl Youngblood, who is the main writer and lead guitarist (and group visionary -- if that's not a tad too pretentious to add), with his literate and intelligent lyrics that transforms Imagine This from goulash to soup de jour.

Youngblood, who contributes such song titles as "Windows of Heaven," "Revolution," and "Nylontro" to the band's debut album, is rather nonchalant about his writing skills. "I just think I've progressed, just like any other writer. I'm really intrigued with song writing -- both

with lyrics and music. I've learned a lot from listening to other people, and I just try to keep an open mind."

When asked to name his lyrical influences, Youngblood rattled off an eclectic list that included the poet Emerson, folk-rock singer Dan Fogelberg, and Rush lyricist Neil Peart. I remember when I first started reading music magazine articles about my favorite bands, and nine out of every ten song writers would say that their influences came from listening to their older sibling's Beatles and Stones records (oops, I used that outdated "r-word" again). Will future generations point to childhood memories of music videos when asked for their influences? Excuse me, it appears I've digressed. Let's get back to Imagine This...

Youngblood, who is 24 and old enough to remember records, tries to make his lyrics stand out as being imaginative, so that they match the creative stretches of the music. "It's important to me that the vibes of the lyrics and the music kind of coincide. It's a turn off to me when I hear artsy music which has too literal of words." Youngblood goes on to explain why this mix brings him bad vibes. It's like when somebody's trying to tell you something and they hit you over the head so hard with it that you don't have to think."

He finds this distasteful method of communication to be more prevalent in Christian music than it is in secular music. This hitting over the head practice of Christian musicians gives new meaning to

the term "headbanging," doesn't it? Youngblood has a less injury prone approach. "I would rather make them ask the question, and then answer it for themselves, using imagery to induce this response." Unlike many other Christian artists, who shall remain nameless, Youngblood trusts the intelligence of his audience to be able to figure out his messages. This is what separates art from propaganda. It goes a long way in explaining why the world is often times repulsed by Christian music. Sure, we are to expect them to be offended by the cross, but must we add insult to injury by creating bad art also? But, once again, I digress.

Pardon me for showing my age again, but another reason I like Imagine This is because the group can sing. You see, long before every musical grouping was called a band, there was the term "singing group." This meant, as the term obviously implied, that it was a group which could sing, and sing well. Not to sound like your grandparents, but a lot of so-called singers these days can't sing. Beyond the Milli Vanilli-ization of the music business, there are a lot of CD's (There -- I didn't use the "R-word.") that I hear on the radio that are off key, unmusical, and downright annoying sometimes. Not so with Imagine This.

"We have great singers in the band," admits Youngblood. "As a producer," adds Youngblood, who also produces his own band, "I definitely wanted to display that. We've been really working on our harmonies for a long time, and that's kind of a neat element to add to the rock and roll sound."

The content of the Imagine This album is really not that different than what other Christian musicians are putting out. But Youngblood has a good explanation for what sets this music apart from the rest of the pack. "We're putting across what we think are the strong points of Christianity, but we're trying to say them in unique ways. There are so many biblical things to talk about, but there are also so many different ways to say them." How come the secular world continues to create endless ways to express love between men and women, while so many Christian songs in the relatively young contemporary field sound so redundant? Am I digressing again?

Continued on Page 16

Questioning Wish For Eden

By David Jenison



I HEARD THAT YOU GUYS ORIGINALLY PLAYED WITH MORTAL?

Rob says, "Both Eddie and I played guitar for Mortal when they first started off. It didn't really work out. I was with them for a year and a half, and Eddie was with them for a year."

ROB, I ALSO HEARD THAT YOU WERE A PRO SURFER.

"Not quite pro," says Rob, "though I could have. I got into surfing when I lived in Santa Cruz. I did all the tournaments in Northern California and even picked up some sponsors like Rip Curl, Billabong, and Gorilla Grip. I eventually started getting into music, and surfing just fizzled out."

"I really enjoyed surfing. I remember one time when my friends totally embarrassed me. When you surf up in Northern California, you have to change from your clothes to your wet suit at the beach. I used to get in the bed of my friend's truck, wrap a towel around myself, and change. I was changing one day, and some very beautiful girls walked by. As they were passing the truck, my friend

ripped the towel right off me. I was standing there with my wet suit around my ankles. I couldn't do anything, so I just said, 'Hi!'"

I'VE HEARD THAT YOU GUYS AREN'T MUCH INTO THE CHRISTIAN MARKET. IN FACT, YOUR GOAL FOR DOING THE ALBUM WAS JUST SO YOU COULD SHOP IT TO A MAJOR SECULAR LABEL. IS THIS TRUE?

Rob responds, "I don't know if that is really the way it started out. We just wanted to do a record, but it started sounding better and better as we went along. At one point, we just said, 'Maybe we have a chance, so let's go for it and try to shop it.' We all want our material in Christian bookstores, because I believe what we have to say can help people. However, I don't think we are into taking over the Christian scene. I have seen a lot of things in the Christian industry."

WHAT DO YOU MEAN? WHAT ANNOYS YOU ABOUT THE CHRISTIAN INDUSTRY?

"Everything is all fine and dandy

and all for God," responds Rob, "but when money comes into it, it's a totally different ball game. Money makes people do crazy things. I believe the record labels start out legit and really feel ministry in the heart, but there's the sin problem."

WHAT ABOUT THE MINISTRY IN YOUR BAND?

"For ministry," says Rob, "I think it depends on the band and what God has planned for that band. It seems that if a group plays Christian shows and wants to be in the Christian industry, people automatically think they should be a ministry band, and if they don't say something from the stage, people say, 'What's wrong with them? They're not doing it for the right reasons.' If God puts it on someone's heart, he should say it; but, if not, why should they force it and be fake? I have a hard time going on stage and being a full ministry band, because I don't feel it's my calling. I have the ability to be there for people and to tell them what happened in my life, but I don't have the ability to preach from the stage. I mean, there's a big misconception in the Christian industry that you're only a ministry band if you preach from the stage. There are other ways to minister than just preaching."

"Being honest gets frustrating. Even if a band is not an evangelistic band, they can still have a strong relationship with God. It seems many Christians don't know this."

WHAT IF SOME KID CAME UP TO YOU AND SAID, 'HOW DO YOU JUSTIFY YOURSELF BEING IN A CHRISTIAN BOOKSTORE?'

Eddie answers, "I think everyone has the right to hear our music. You can't be closed minded, because that's what scares people away from God. It's sad, because many people in the Christian industry automatically size up a person without even talking with them."

SO, DOES ANYTHING CRAZY EVER HAPPEN AT YOUR SHOWS?

Eddie answers, "Rob's done some stage dives. This one time, he got ready and sweaty, got a running start and the people split. He took out about three or four people and smacked on the floor. One guy he laid out was moaning pretty hard."

Continued on Page 16

SANDONYX

MAJESTIC SERENITY



Fact: Every person in this picture will stand before God and personally answer to God for their sins, whether they know it or not. Read Revelation 20:11-15

Fact: This audience is crying out for answers... something different...something lasting. They're looking for someone to show them how to live. What did Jesus say in John 4:14?

Question: If this band knew what this audience was looking for and didn't tell them, would it be wrong? Read Romans 10:14

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CATCHING UP WITH BELIEVER



Believer's *Dimensions* album has received a lot of praise since its release last Fall. Because it was such a good album and the band had decided not to do any major touring, we felt it would be a good idea to get on the phone with vocalist/guitarist Kurt Bachman and find out what was going on with this intense band.

I UNDERTAND YOU AND JOEY ARE RUNNING A STUDIO NOW.

"Yeah," admits Kurt. "It's Joey, myself and a friend of ours named Ted Hermanson, who co-produced the album with us. He's actually a software engineer for Turtle Beach Software. We just basically sit there and collect the best gear possible and offer it to anybody. We just finished recording the new Living Sacrifice record. It sounds pretty amazing. It's good stuff. It's different. We're really impressed with it."

YOU'RE NOT TOURING AND GOING FOR THE WHOLE BAND THING RIGHT NOW. WHAT'S UP?

It's pretty weird, actually. Since we're not touring I started college again. I'm into getting my degree and learning. That's just me. We've also got the studio. We're very involved with it. As far as the band is concerned, we're not touring. A lot of people are bumming on that, but we've had our shares of tours and things. We've really decided to concentrate on more of the studio aspect. The way inflation is, we're having a hard time getting tour

support. We have families here. We just decided to put the album out. This is not to say we're never gonna play. It's definitely possible that we can play some scattered shows down the road, but as full-length touring is concerned, no.

"We're writing some new stuff now that's pretty bizarre. It's very, very different. It's probably gonna go under a different name. It's like a whole other band. It's Joey and myself and Ted Hermanson, who's an excellent bass player and Scott Laird. It's all the guys that are in Believer now, except for Jim Winter.

"I don't like to pigeonhole anything, but it's kind of like rock fusion/progressive rock -- like Yes, but a little weirder than that. Picture Believer with rhythm-type structures. It's pretty weird. It's something we want to do. We'll probably have an album out eventually. I don't know if a lot of Believer fans are going to be into it. It's not heavy, but I think people that are a little off the edge but aren't into the heavy stuff will like it. It's still mentally challenging. There's some straightforward stuff, but it's pretty progressive. The guy who spoke on 'Dementia' ('Mr. Velvet Voice') -- he's going to be singing. It might be like Yes meets Bad Company or something like that."

WHAT LED TO THIS DIRECTION?

"I don't know. It's hard to say. We've been playing the heavy stuff for thousands of years and...it's not that we're mellowing out or we don't like heavy stuff

and we're never gonna play it again. It's more of a challenge. It's something different to do for a change. It's like a total change of direction, but we're really enjoying the playing. It's not like a wimp-out, because it's still very technical to play; it's just not heavy.

"It's still on a musical level where we're at -- and even actually a little higher, since we don't have distortion. We're real excited to record something nice and clean. I guess it's like another stage. We enjoy listening to stuff like this. We've always had a pretty open mind about different musical styles. It will give me a chance to work with another musical arranger.

"People are gonna hate me after this interview! 'What are they doing?' But, like I said, that doesn't mean Believer is finished. We're still having business meetings. This is just another challenge."

HAVE YOU RETREATED INTO A STATE OF EXILE, OR IS THIS JUST KINDA KICKIN' BACK?

"I'd go more with the kicking back thing. We're still in there. If people could see what the studio is like, they'd see we're more into the music business now more than ever. Instead of the rock and roller type guy who's out there and playing and touring; it's like we're on another plateau. We're not gonna make the news as much, but, as far as everything's concerned, I don't see us ever getting out of the music thing. We've talked about that. We're musicians. We love to play. We love the creative process. We love getting the letters from people, saying, 'Hey, something you wrote has affected my life.'

"God uses us in the studio all the time; and that's great, because so many people are like, 'Well, you have to be in a band, touring and be out there and witnessing this way.' That's bunk. That's just one way. It really has nothing to do with where the band is now. I'd think of it more as a slowing down or putting our strengths in different places, rather than being this mega-touring band. I wouldn't say that we're out of it. You'll see 'Produced by The Trauma Team' on albums.

"I don't know what this other band is going to be called. I don't think it's going to be called 'Believer Chronicles,' because we don't want people to get a misconception of what it's going to be like. So, we're still going to be in the musical realm...maybe not as underground

Guardian and Pakaderm/Word would like to thank the readers of Heaven's Metal



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as we were before. I'm not sure how people are going to accept it, or if they're going to accept it at all. Some people might hate us. They might expect us to play something heavy forever. We might have a totally different fan base. We're not out there to ride Believer until it's totally dead. We didn't want to be one of these bands that puts out albums and, after the sixth album, people are saying, 'Man, these guys are just digging a hole. They're not going anywhere.' We never wanted to be one of those bands.

"It's cool, because we have the ability to do whatever we want, and change our focus and do different things, rather than be trapped in this 'Believer shell,' you know: 'You have to play this, you have to say this, you have to be this.' We don't want to disappoint a lot of people. It's not like Believer's done. We're just doing a different thing right now.

"We're all involved and we're happy. We realized that it's what's important -- for us to be happy. If we're unhappy, we're gonna put out stuff that won't get people into it. For it to be amazing, you have to be on fire and into it all the time.

"I can't see us as people straying

from each other. We love working with each other. When you have a relationship like we have, as far as our faith is concerned and our friendship, you just don't walk away from something like that."

TELL ME ABOUT THE PERSONNEL CHANGES.

"Jim (Winter) probably won't be on this new project. It's not going to be a Believer album. As far as Dave and Wyatt goes, it really wasn't like a, 'Hey, we quit!' or 'You guys are fired!' thing. After we toured, Dave and Deana wanted to start a family and build a house. They're really

"WE'RE NOT OUT THERE TO RIDE BELIEVER UNTIL IT'S TOTALLY DEAD."

focusing on the house and they really didn't have a lot of time to put into *Dimensions*. So, that was cool. We thought it was great. Wyatt was the same

way. He's getting married and he's got a nice job now down in Philly, which takes up the majority of his time. He's going to Graduate School right now. So, it's like he was extremely busy also. He wanted to settle down and kind of be like normal, you know (laughs). That's great. Nobody had any problems with that. We still talk to each other."

WAS IT A MAD SCRAMBLE TO REPLACE DAVE AND WYATT?

"No, not at all. We had already written everything and Jim was a great help and a fabulous player. He had been there since Believer started. He'd help us write things. He's been a really good musician and friend forever, basically. It was nice to have him step in and do some work. Scott (Laird) had been on every album. He's there now and a big part of it. It was different than the last album, because Dave and Wyatt weren't there.

"The talent that we have around us is great. It's a 'do whatever you want to do musically' thing now."

As always, Believer comes up with a musical surprise for its fans. When these guys do record some more music, you can be sure you'll hear about it here. **HM**

MAKING A PASS-A-FIST

BY DAN MACINTOSH

It all started with a song. This new Industrial-Roots Rock-World Music-Over Hyphenated style of a project orchestrated by Dave Perkins and Lynn Nichols called Passafist grew out of something Perkins had written for a film soundtrack. "I had done a song," explains Perkins, "that was going to be in a movie that was being shot over in London last year. And I wanted to do a kind of semi-industrial version of it, because: number one, I was really into that vernacular of music; and number two, they wanted a song that they could choreograph a dance scene to that was being filmed in an ultra-alternative European club situation. Kind of a very decadent Berlin type of night club. So anyway, I did this song called 'The Christ Of The Nuclear Age.'"

When Lynn Nichols heard this tune he told Perkins how much he liked it. "One thing led to another," continues Perkins, "and I said, 'Hey, we ought to write several more and do a record. It would be a blast.'"

Many avid music listeners probably do not associate Dave Perkins, who has brought a kind of roots rock sound to his own solo record a few years back, as well as bringing out these same rootsy sounds in his production work with Randy Stonehill and many other artists over the years, with industrial music. But Perkins understands why this side of his musical nature has never been seen.

"I've played virtually every music there is to be played, and have been in bands which specialized in one or more of them. I think that most of the stuff that you'd probably know about me is based upon what was done in the Christian music community. And when I was producing a lot in the Christian marketplace, there wasn't a lot of that (industrial music) going on."

Both Perkins and Nichols want to make it clear that this is not an attempt to capitalize on the industrial fad. In fact, industrial is just one of this product's ingredients.

"Coming off the Chagall (Guevara) stuff," explains Nichols, "it was something totally different. That sounded like fun, because it's largely Dave and I and samples and machines. Although we have integrated very ethnic African rhythmic aspects," adds Nichols, "with real players. So we're marrying several



PASS-A-FIST surrounded by groupies prior to entering the studio to record their new R.E.X. project
(Photo by: Ben Pearson; Creative "Brushing" courtesy of L. Arthur Nichols)

different things together."

When Perkins and Nichols think back on their experiences with Chagall Guevara's first album, the word disappointment seems to sum up the situation best. "We were definitely frustrated with MCA Records," recalls Nichols. "MCA didn't know what to do with the kind of music we were making. This record company has never been good at taking the alternative genre, or almost anything rock & roll -- outside of maybe Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers -- and making it successful."

"We went with that company," continues Nichols, "because they had convinced us that they were really in the midst of a change (for the better), and indeed they were. When we were talking to them, we met with several new people -- A&R people, marketing people, alternative college promotion people -- they had hired and brought on board, and there were some very strong, impressive, new people. And it really did look like they were tooling up to go after that (alternative) market."

Unfortunately for Chagall Guevara, there were more changes on the

way at MCA that would not be in the best interests of the band.

"Then a Japanese company bought them out," continues Nichols. "Lots of internal shake-ups took place, and a lot of the people that came on board that were dealing with us at the time our record launched, were leaving or being fired. The marketing director, who was a terrific guy, left right at the point our record was launched. We had to wait a long time to find somebody else."

These changes took a real toll on the album's chances of being exposed in the marketplace. "We had a single worked to college radio that was called 'Violet Blue,' which, from where we were sitting, we really didn't think it was a college single. Still, it did pretty well. But we couldn't follow-up with another one, because the alternative department, at this point, had been fired."

Yet, with all the label problems Chagall had, there were also some positives Nichols can point back to. For one, the band, which loved to play live, was able to tour Europe opening for the band Squeeze. Secondly, and most

PRECIOUS DEATH -- THERE GOES A STRANGE ONE

BY ANDREW CRUMP



It did not make CNN Headline News; but, for some avid Christian rock fans, it should have. Precious Death, who seemed to enjoy its bachelor lifestyle, has finally surrendered to the vows of marriage with an attractive record company called Metro One. The first album, to be released February 23, will be a re-mastered version of the band's self-titled, self-financed album, which was independently released last year.

Most bands with Precious Death's talent have no problem signing the bottom line on a record contract with a good record company. So how could a band of Precious Death's magnitude have been overlooked for five and a half years? Oddly enough, the band was not looking to be signed. But, in order to reach more people, a record deal was inevitable. "You can only do so much from your living room," commented guitarist David Bishop. "Without financial backing and publicity, your hands are basically tied. A record label enhances everything, so that's good."

"I don't think we have any expectations or false expectations about changing our lives financially," added bassist Andy Koehler. "I think we'll still all be broke. But I think the cool thing is that kids will be able to hear our music, and we will be a little bit better known across the nation."

In searching for a record company, Precious Death did not want to sacrifice what a lot of companies wanted to take away, but Metro One was not like the other record companies. "They share our view of ministry," explained vocalist Chris Scott. "They were willing to let us

continue to work in the secular market and to evangelize in that direction."

With this God-inspired direction, Precious Death has definitely made a name for itself in the mainstream arena. The band was nominated for five L.A. Music Awards and took home trophies for "Best Ballad" and "Best Hook." (Mortal won two awards and Die Happy won one)

"Most of the people that I talked to either hated or disliked Christians," remembered Chris about the night of the awards ceremony. "That night, almost all of us got to say something about Christ, which was really cool. The fact that the two bands that won the most awards -- us and Mortal -- were both Christian bands really says something about how far the Christian music scene has come in the last few years."

**"95% OF ALL THE
EVANGELISM THAT WE
DO HAPPENS OUTSIDE
OF THIS BAND."**

Drummer Roger Sampson thought the coolest thing about the L.A. Music Awards was being nominated for "Best Lyrics." "Our lyrics are God-centered. They don't always say, 'Jesus, Jesus,' but they are about life, which is about God. I had to really sit down and go, 'Okay, cool. Are we doing the right thing, or are we jacked up?' The world's supposed to hate us. I don't think we're jacked up. I think we're doing the right thing and God blessed it, and it was a cool thing."

Along with the attention given to

the band in Los Angeles, Precious Death has also made a name for itself with other mainstream admirers across the country. The band may have the opportunity to play at a H.E.M.P. Festival, which is a show to promote the legalization of marijuana. "We really want to play this H.E.M.P. Fest that's coming up," said Chris. "That's one of the things that we can get into that most bands can't. It's always an awesome time of ministry. We can teach and evangelize and just get to know people and get them over all of their stupid, liberal ideas of who Christians are and what we're supposed to be in Christ."

"I think it would be great," added Roger. "I can't wait to play that stinkin' thing. The (organizer) called me up and said, 'Well, you know you're supposed to say something about promoting marijuana?' Quite frankly -- here we go -- it doesn't matter to me whether it's legal or not. It doesn't matter on the outside. If you tell people not to smoke marijuana -- if they don't have the Spirit of the Lord, they're going to smoke it anyway. It's not an external issue; it's an internal issue. Quite frankly, I don't care. But I'm not going to go up there and say something that's going to compromise my faith either."

"Some Christians don't have a problem with going out and slamming a few beers after work, but yet they freak out over the subject of marijuana," continued Chris. "I don't promote drinking any more than I do marijuana. I think getting drunk one way or the other or getting stoned -- neither one of them is any good. It's just another ultra-Christian thing that we make one a worse sin than the other."

Precious Death is reaching audiences that some bands only dream of reaching. And, as with Stryper, King's X and the Galactic Cowboys, some Christians may try to criticize the approach Precious Death uses to spread the love of Jesus. "I would figure that probably 95% of all the evangelism that we do happens outside of this band," said Chris. "The band is just one way in which God has given us to glorify Him. Most of what we do is in our lives and our interaction with people. It doesn't have anything really to do with the band."

"Now someone is going to say," added Roger, "Everybody is supposed to evangelize." True, but not everybody is supposed to teach from the stage. I think you can't set absolutes. When we start

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THE SEVENTY SEVENS -- NOBODY'S FAULT BUT THEIRS



By ANDREW CRUMP

could write that were in that vein."

"Nobody's Fault But Mine," with some reservations, will be the first track on the new album. "There's been so many requests for us to record it that we did it -- by request," said Mike. "I always hate recording a cover unless you can do something totally different or better. We tried to play it better, I guess. It was mainly done for the fans, and it came out pretty good. We were going to bury it in the album, but we decided to put it first to get it out of the way."

Even though the band is accustomed to writing, playing and recording pop oriented songs, The Seventy Sevens found that the technical aspect of playing a heavier style of music was not as challenging as some may have thought. "For one thing, we spent a lot of time rehearsing for (the album) and playing together," explained Mike. "It wasn't harder to play; it was just harder to write and stay in emotionally. That was the part that was hard."

"Musically, this stuff kind of comes natural, I think. In many ways it was easier. The pop things tend to be more challenging, because they're more intricate and subtle and delicate. They're harder to play on stage actually, whereas the rock stuff tends to just open up and go. You can just kind of turn up your amp and let your guitar really do the work for you. It's not so much stumbling over little parts and harmonies and things like that. You just let it rip."

In a world of turmoil and uncertainty, the trials involved have not dodged The Seventy Sevens. Many who keep in tune with the band have been concerned with the health of guitarist David Leonhardt, who was diagnosed with Hodgkin's Disease -- a more treatable form of cancer. Mike said that David was actively involved with the recording of the new album, and that David's treatment for the cancer has been successful.

"The 90's are a difficult time no matter how you slice it," pondered Mike. "I certainly know that to be true personally. I just think in general music is reflecting what's going on out there. We just desire all of your prayers that you feel so led, because we need lots and lots of it. It's very hard to do what we do, and we have a lot of deep needs in our lives and in our band to keep going and to do it right."

HM

The 1990's have become a decade of anger and aggression. Violence is on the rise, and morals are declining. The "grungy" music that floods the airwaves seems to reflect such a society. One band that would appear least likely to express itself in such a raunchy way has cranked up the amps to let the music scream. With its new album, *Drowning With Land In Sight*, The Seventy Sevens reveal a side that has rarely been heard.

"It's definitely a more desperate kind of record than even the ones we've done in the past," explained vocalist and guitarist Mike Roe. "There was a lot more anger and frustration. Naturally, when there's lots of that you tend to want to get it out musically. There are more hard rock kinds of things on it -- more intense electric guitars."

Headbangers who are familiar with the band's earlier pop/alternative creations will probably ask, "How can a pop band suddenly play heavy music?" But the Seventy Sevens are no strangers to heavy music. "The band started with that kind of influence with *Ping-Pong Over The Abyss* a long time ago," remembered Mike. "The band kind of had an initial reputation for playing that sort of thing. We eventually did more and more pop things and alternative kinds of things and never really returned to our sort of rock roots until recently -- if you can call them roots. It's just one part of the root. We've got so many different influences that we tend to just bounce back and forth between them."

"I just think there was a long period of time where none of us were listening to much heavy rock stuff. I know

that was true for me, with the exception of pulling out a Jimi Hendrix or Led Zeppelin album once in a while. Lately, that sound has come back in such an extreme degree that we've all been hearing a lot of it again."

"Specifically, our bass player Mark (Harmon) has been bringing in Stone Temple Pilots or Alice In Chains, or something like that. Inevitably, someone would grab the *Paranoid* album by Black Sabbath and start throwing it on saying, 'Listen to this. Remember this?' Before you know it, you're starting to think along those lines. You start playing things in rehearsal."

"WE'VE GOT SO MANY DIFFERENT INFLUENCES THAT WE BOUNCE BACK AND FORTH BETWEEN THEM."

"It was not deliberate, but it just seemed appropriate for how we feel now. We've tried to remain true to whatever is influencing us at the moment. There was a whole lotta noise influencing us. It does n't dominate the entire album, just the first half mostly. There's all sorts of things on it; but, for the most part, it hits pretty hard and holds you there for quite a while."

Mike attributed playing Led Zeppelin's version of the Blind Willie (Johnson) song "Nobody's Fault But Mine" during the band's concerts as one of the reasons for The Seventy Sevens' heavier sound on the new album. "The experience of playing 'Nobody's Fault But Mine' on stage made us want to play the heavier rock stuff. Once we got a handle on how to do it well, we wanted to take advantage of that and see what things we

CRASHDOG -- POSITIVE PUNK

By JERRY WILSON

Remember the 70's? Energy crisis, Watergate, disco, polyester? Now, remember 1978 when four British kids (no, not John, Paul, Ringo & George) set the music world on its ear for about fifteen minutes before they self-destructed -- one literally? Of course you do. Who can forget the Sex Pistols, the penultimate word in punk rock? Although their time was short (they only recorded one actual album), they were the vanguard of a whole generation of young and angry people who took out their frustrations on society and each other through the loudest burst of rebellious rock 'n' roll since its creation in the 50's.

Although punk as a genre of music never reached much in the way of commercial acceptance, at least in this country, its influence on the music that has come out since is indelible. While "pure" punk bands (usually referred to as hardcore) are not numerous, and mohawk haircuts along with safety pins through the nose are generally considered passe, the bands who carry the raw energy and anger of punk and have fused it with more conventional forms of rock 'n' roll are riding a huge wave of popularity today. When Eddie Vedder, the lead singer of Pearl Jam, is on the cover of *Time*, and said band is riding on the top of the charts along with Nirvana and Stone Temple Pilots, it doesn't take much to deduce that punk isn't dead just yet.

So, where does this tie into the Christian music world? After all, the explicit nihilism of the punk mentality hardly comes off as if there would be much room for it to coexist with the teachings of Christ. And yet, rebellion has been one of the cores of Christianity throughout the centuries. Be it Jesus defying the rigid religious mores of the Pharisees, or Luther at the time of the Reformation, or any number of other instances, opposition fueled by the convictions of faith against an establishment have time and again been a driving force in the promotion of the cause of Christ.

Enter Crashdog. Based in Jesus People USA in Chicago, the same community from which REZ comes from, Crashdog is that rarity in Christian music: a genuine punk band -- at least in sound and style. Its latest release *Mud Angels*, is song after song of pounding speed-of-light rhythms, smash and burn guitar chords,

and shouted vocals which spit out words in machine gun fashion dealing with not only an overt evangelistic message, but also social and political themes.

Spike Nard, the leader of Crashdog, recently shared some of his thoughts on music and other relevant matters. Nard points out that Crashdog is a legitimate descendant from at least some of the ideals which spawned punk in its beginning.

As he puts it, "I've seen a lot of changes in the punk scene from when it started back in the 70's. At that time, the message drove the music. Even though the Pistols were messed-up individuals, they served as a rallying point for the youth of England -- and really the world -- to stand up and not sit down for governmental injustices or societal injustices. Of course, their solutions weren't positive or constructive, and certainly weren't Biblical or righteous. What I've seen is that whenever money or the industry become involved, the message gets put on the back burner."

He adds, "As a band, we've never been driven by either money or the business. We're on our own label (Grrr), and we're supported by our church. The band is not our bread and butter. We don't write music or lyrics in the context of 'Is this going to make money?' For us, we want to bring back that spirit of the late 70's and say that there's a lot of jive stuff that goes down in the government, in the world, in our towns, in our churches, in our families, and in our own lives that we need to take radical steps on. It's almost a revolutionary feel of getting up and being involved."

Nard believes in direct involvement, and, through his work at JPUSA, practices what he preaches. He comments, "As a Christian, I cannot sit around and say, 'I can't watch that,' or 'I can't hear that,' not say anything about it, and then go to evening worship thinking that I'm going to have a fulfilling time. Worship has many forms, and one of those forms is holding up the justice that the Lord outlines. That's not justice as far as correctional institutions, but justice in the sense of what's right and wrong.

"If a person is politically corrupt,



it's my duty as a Christian to say there's something wrong here. If there's someone in the church who's living an unsubmitted life or is living in sin, and no one, including myself, is confronting that person, I can't lie to myself and say, 'Oh, I'm going to go praise the Lord now,' and not do what the Lord has required me to do by confronting that person and holding them accountable by being my brother's keeper. The other side of that is making sure that my life is in account. I can't go to evening worship without paying my debts and making sure that I'm coming before the Lord asking forgiveness for my sins."

What is Nard's, and Crashdog's goal? "We hope to get people involved through the music. Life isn't all Nintendo and Twinkies. There are a lot of problems out there. It's not just in Chicago where I live. There are a lot of small towns where people are poor, not just financially, but spiritually. They're poor in spirit. They're lonely and depressed. I want our fans to know that they can get involved with these people's lives and live out the Gospel. Jesus didn't want His followers to think that being a Christian is just a name tag. He wants us to live it out. He set the example by forfeiting His own life so we could enjoy eternal life. We need to forfeit our lives on this earth in terms of our dreams and goals." **HM**

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Imagine This Cont'd:

Youngblood wants this music to stand out as creative to those who listen to it; but, more importantly, he wants it to be a tool to reach out to so many who are troubled.

"We want them to feel that we as people are real, that we have troubles, we aren't afraid to look out at the world and say, 'We're in this with you and we've got to stick together.' On top of that, we'd like to show them that Jesus Christ is the answer. And our songs, Lord willing, will lead them in that direction."

Youngblood, if you'll pardon the pun, is just the kind of young blood that is needed in Christian music today. This band is both creative and compassionate. It is both musical and lyrical. It has imagination, yet it also is well grounded in the basics of the Gospel. What more can we ask for?

It's a rare thing to find a band that can bridge the progressive side of the musical spectrum with the mainstream. When a band like Imagine This is discovered, it should be celebrated. And who would have expected to make such a find in the heart of the Bible belt, in a little old state we like to call Texas? Who would have imagined this? **HM**

PRECIOUS DEATH CONT'D:

setting absolutes in many, many areas, that's when we get bogus. That's legalism. There are absolutes in the Bible, and you can't argue with those. But when man starts to create his own absolutes, which unfortunately the Christian community is doing, they're extra-Biblical, and they're legalism."

"You have to be holy," continued Chris. "The worst problem in the Christian rock scene, and the reason why I believe it is not as effective as it used to be -- even though it has more money and more promotion than it has ever had before -- is because a lot of the people in the scene are not hard-core and disciplined in their faith. You don't necessarily know exactly what they are talking about, and they're not holy. The most important thing is holiness. Nothing could be more important to people that are going to try to serve the Lord in their work."

And how do four Christian men keep their heads above the water in a world that tries to pull them under? "Study the Word diligently to find yourselves approved," explained Chris. "If we don't study the Word as Christians, we're never going to know what's going on." **HM**

Wish For Eden Cont'd:

"Also, there was our first show, which was at the Civic Center in a town called Yucaipapa. I invited my parents to come down, and my whole family ended up coming. They were hanging out in the side room. We were jamming, and people in the room started lighting up pot. My dad, he just started freakin.' He really let me have it after the show. Seeing people smoke didn't bother me, but it was an embarrassment that my dad had to see it."

IS YOUR DADA STRICT CHRISTIAN?

"Oh yeah," responds Eddie. "I was raised very strict. Looking back, it was just so strict. I remember, as a kid I hated being in church, because it was forced on me. I remember having to read in front of people, and I hated it because it made me so nervous."

"Do you really think we can call it a gift if we force it down people's throats?"

"I don't think God wants Christianity forced on people. Being totally honest, do you really think we can call it a gift if we force it down people's throats? That's one of the reasons we don't preach on stage. I so hated having Christianity forced down my throat. How could I turn around and do the same to other people?"

DID YOU EVENTUALLY BACKSLIDE?

"Oh yeah, sure," says Eddie. "I went away to a boarding school back East. It was the first time away from my parents. There was no real supervision. I met with a bunch of people who had gone through the same thing, and everyone wanted to experience what they were told was so bad. I ended up getting kicked out."

"I went haywire for a while, but I eventually came to a point that I didn't feel the need to get into trouble anymore. My change was not because someone was preaching at me or telling me that I was disappointing God. It just hit me -- I needed something more in my life. And things just went from there." **HM**

PASS-A-FIST Cont'd:

importantly, the group made an album it was proud of, and probably had a much bigger production than most alternative bands in the Christian marketplace could ever dream of having. And the best news of all for Chagall fans is that the band has never really broken up. Surprisingly, with everything that went wrong at MCA, the label was still willing to have the band make a second album.

"It was funny," says Nichols, "that during all this shake-up MCA was dropping artists like flies. And we were so frustrated with them that we said, 'Good, hopefully they'll drop us,' and it looked like they would. But, of course, no, they wanted us to make another record. It sounds funny, because with so many people wanting to get signed, and wanting to get a deal, and here we are wanting to get out of one. It then took us a couple of months to wiggle out of our contract."

With Passafist being a record for a Christian label such as R.E.X., one wonders if this will be a more explicitly Christian project than Chagall was.

"I would say that there are lots of messages," explains Perkins, "and that there are lots of concepts in there that are being chewed on by a lot of people. And some of them are just from human beings living on the planet in this day and age. And some of them are certainly obviously the same thing plus the Christian mind-set, or a scripture centered mind-set. A lot of the things are more cultural. Broadly cultural, and less initiated by the church or the religious community."

"We're writing about a lot of things," adds Nichols, "as viewed through the eyes of a couple of people who are believers."

At the time of this interview, Passafist was still working on the lyrics for this project, and they were unable to give specific examples. But one can be optimistic, based upon these two individual's previous projects, that this will be a highly intelligent and entertaining project.

When you consider Steve Taylor's new solo album and this new Passafist project, along with the possibility of a new Chagall Guevara album someday in the future, one is reassured to know that the individuals which made Chagall such a welcome gift to the Christian marketplace are still busy creating. Expect Passafist to stand out on its own as one of the more anticipated projects released to the Christian marketplace, and not just something to keep fans pacified between Chagall Guevara albums. **HM**

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Matt. 10:28

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L to R: Jay Jay, Rob Halford, Brian Tilse, Russ Parrish, Scott Travis (Photo: Neil Zlozower)

YOU WENT FROM PLAYING IN A VETERAN METAL BAND TO A GROUP OF YOUNG, HUNGRY MUSICIANS. HOW HAS THE CHEMISTRY BEEN?

"Oh, it's been absolutely sensational," responds Rob. "It really has been so fulfilling to have the opportunity to work with this generation of musician, because it's just been nothing but so much positive energy and feedback and great communication -- right from the very beginning. Now we're actually on the road together. It's even more of a fulfilling experience to me."

HOW DO YOU THINK THEY FEEL ABOUT YOU -- PROBABLY A HERO TO THEM IN MANY WAYS?

"Well, it's certainly afforded me a tremendous amount of respect and appreciation; but, by the same token, I explained to them that I wanted them to view my position in the band as important and as on the same level as everybody else -- the way it should be."

WHAT TURNED YOU ON TO THE SOUNDS THAT CYANIDE WAS MAKING?

"Well, I met Jay Jay and Brian, who were the bass player and the guitar player for Cyanide, I met them in Phoenix.

They'd moved down there from Toledo. They were just hanging out in Phoenix looking for management and representation and so forth. Jay Jay is also a very talented tattoo artist. So, he was doing some work on me one day and he told me that he had a band and, 'Would I come and check 'em out?' which is what I did. When I saw 'em play, it just blew me away. It was absolutely sensational. I asked them a couple weeks later if they wanted to join the band and they said, 'Yeah.' So, they came one board. I'd known Ross, our rhythm guitar player, for a few years from California. Scott, of course, came over from Priest to do the drumming. That's pretty much how the band got together."

WHAT MADE YOU FEEL THAT THE MARRIAGE OF THIS STYLE OF MUSIC WITH YOUR VOCALS WOULD WORK?

"I think that would be a bit conceited of me to have made that assumption, because I don't presume anything until I try it out. Really, it was just a case of hit and miss. As far as putting any band together, you don't know how it's going to work out until you plug the amps in and start firing up the music in the rehearsal situation. That's pretty much where I put my thoughts until the day we started to do this work. It was like a getting thrown across, you know. It was so

incredible."

WHEN YOU FIRST MET THE GUYS, HAD YOU HAD THE IDEA OF PUTTING YOUR OWN BAND TOGETHER ALREADY?

"Well, I really have been thinking about it for many, many years. It was just a question of waiting for the right moment and the right time to fulfill the opportunity. So, at the end of '91, that was when I went back to Phoenix after the last Priest tour and I decided to really start to look hard and do a lot of pre-emptive working in putting the whole thing together as a band."

THE NAME OF THE ALBUM IS CALLED WAR OF WORDS. HOW IMPORTANT DO YOU THINK IT IS TO BE CAREFUL AND RESPONSIBLE WITH THE WORDS WE USE?

"Umm. That's an interesting question. I think it's extremely important to think before you open your mouth. That's one approach and one attitude I've always felt has been important for me as a person. But, as far as understanding the power of language and the incredible way that words can effect people -- mentally and emotionally. I think that it's a very, very potent part of civilization. When one word is used one way they create wars, and when words are used in another way they create a whole different scenerio. That's the power of speech."

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT JESUS CHRIST?

"How do I feel about Him? Well, I've always had a tremendous amount of religious faith and belief, so that's an important part of my life."

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF HIS CLAIMS TO BE "THE WAY, THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE AND NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER BUT BY ME?"

"I think that's the truth."

UMM, ARE YOU FAMILIAR WITH SOME OF THE TRENDS THAT HAVE COME INTO HEAVY METAL MUSIC, LIKE THE CHRISTIAN METAL?

"Yes, I'm aware of that, yeah! Through my friends, like bands...when Stryper was together. That kind of thing."

WHAT WAS YOUR

IMPRESSION OF THAT?

"I thought they were great! I have no qualms or prejudice with people doing whatever they want to do. I've always considered myself to be a tolerant human being."

WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS WITH FIGHT?

"Just to really forge ahead and find and break new ground and make new music and do something different and excite people, entertain people, just give them some choice and variety in the tremendous amount of scope and display of contemporary metal music in the 90's."

WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE FUTURE OF HEAVY METAL?

"Well, I'd like to think that it'll continue to explore the new, non-restrictive barrier-free possibilities. That's what's so appealing to me right now about the current scene -- that there is so much choice and variety and they're no limits. Everybody is going out there and doing their own thing."

IT'S REALLY INTERESTING COMING FROM YOU, BECAUSE FOR SO LONG JUDAS PRIEST CAME TO EPITOMIZE THE "NEW WAVE OF BRITISH HEAVY METAL" AND THE METAL SOUND.

"I just feel this whole thing is something I want to continue in this new vein."

WHAT DO YOUR BELIEFS ABOUT JESUS...WHAT KIND OF IMPACT DOES THAT HAVE ON YOUR LIFE ON A DAY-TO-DAY BASIS?

"It just gives me a tremendous amount of serenity and, um, control, basically."

HAVE YOU ALWAYS HELD THESE KIND OF VIEWS, OR IS THIS SOMETHING THAT'S NEW?

"I think it was a mental thing. I think the more you live, the more you think about all of the different things that go on in the world and that you look inside your own head and your own heart for lots of questions and look for answers to those questions. It's just a growth pattern, really. That side of me was fulfilled many, many years ago. I've been living with that appreciation and that acceptance for many, many years."

DO YOU LABEL

YOURSELF A BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIAN?

"No, I don't think I'd label myself that at all. I think I always was that way anyway."

DID YOU GROW UP IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND?

"Yeah, that's right. Yes."

Although there was never any formal type of philosophy or rigorous kind of, you know, in some parts of the church and some parts of religion there are certain areas that are demanded of you in a very kind of strong and dedicated way. But for me I think it's always about finding what's right for you and finding the answers and the solutions in the way that you feel is the way that brings you the most comfort and the most peacefulness."

SO, HAVE YOU RECEIVED AND EMBRACED FORGIVENESS OF YOUR SINS?

"Umm, oh yeah! I did that a long time ago."

"I think it's always about finding what's right for you."

DID THAT CHANGE YOUR OUTLOOK ON THINGS?

"Yeah, it brought me a lot of qualities of, you know, inner peace and a broader acceptance of life."

DO YOU FEEL LIKE SOME OF THE IDEAS AND LYRICS REPRESENTED BY YOUR PAST IN JUDAS PRIEST AND ALL... DO YOU FEEL LIKE THEY PARALLEL AND PROMOTE THAT BELIEF OR CONTRADICT IT?

"Well, I think it depends whether you do it with fiction or fact. Whether you're dealing with fantasy or reality. That was certainly my role in Priest -- dealing with a lot of mythological, fantasy-type of conditioning. So, I think that was an accepted standard and pretty much how we were viewed when I was with that band."

AS FAR AS A LOT OF THINKING GOES, I THINK A LOT OF EUROPEAN THOUGHT IS MUCH MORE EMBRACING TO THAT KIND OF THINKING THAN, LIKE A SOUTHERN BAPTIST OR THE AMERICAN THINKING GOES.

"Yeah, I think that we're kind of audible with people, put everything under a microscope and analyze it."

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE LYRICS ON FIGHT'S DEBUT ALBUM THAT YOU ARE PARTICULARLY FOND OF?

"Well, I like all of them, actually. I think that they're very eclectic, interesting. Various topics, from songs like "Into The Pit," which deal with those issues whereby we all have the powers as individuals to take on any kind of large group or body of people or power of people. The small single voice has a tremendous amount of weight behind it. We all have the power within ourselves to do whatever we wish to do, and that we only put limits on ourselves by our own choosing."

WHAT HAVE BEEN SOME OF YOUR MUSICAL INSPIRATIONS IN YOUR EARLY DAYS OF GETTING INVOLVED IN MUSIC?

"Well, it was a multitude of things, really, with lots of different kinds of bands. Growing up as a teenager, I certainly didn't have the choice and variety that today's generation has. But, music in general has always been a very powerful, emotive form of art. It continues to move me tremendously. There was never really one specific group or person. It's just been pure emotion of music as a complete experience that continues to drive me."

YOU CERTAINLY HAD YOUR OWN ART EVOLVE QUITE A BIT. I REALLY APPRECIATED SOME OF YOUR VERY EARLY WORK WITH JUDAS PRIEST AND SEEN THE EVOLUTION AND STYLE CHANGES OF THAT MUSIC UP ON THROUGH FIGHT. I SEE SOME PARALLELS TO WHAT YOU'RE DOING WITH FIGHT BACK TO THE EARLY WORK OF JUDAS PRIEST. I FELT LIKE YOU KIND OF SETTLED INTO SOMETHING THAT

WORKED THROUGHOUT THE MIDDLE YEARS. I GUESS, FROM *Hellbent...* ON. IN FIGHT, IT SEEMS LIKE YOU'RE EXPERIMENTING MORE. IT'S REFRESHING TO SEE THAT.

HEAVEN'S METAL IS A MAGAZINE THAT PREDOMINANTLY COVERS THE CHRISTIAN HARD MUSIC SCENE. BUT IN EVERY ISSUE WE ALWAYS TAKE THE TIME TO INTERVIEW AT LEAST ONE ARTIST WHO DOESN'T NECESSARILY FIT UNDER THAT LABEL AND KIND OF GET THEIR VIEW-POINT OF THINGS AND ALSO GET ACROSS OUR VIEW-POINT. IS THERE ANYTHING YOU'D LIKE TO SAY TO OUR READERS CONSIDERING THAT THEY'RE MOSTLY CHRISTIAN KIDS WHO LISTEN TO BANDS LIKE STRYPER?

"Well, I'd just like them to consider this fact and this possibility: That there is a tremendous amount of prejudgmental analysis that goes on within certain areas of the media and of the industry, and that a lot of people are misguided and a lot of people are given misinformation by certain groups and organizations, so I would always ask people, when they're making a judgment, to make a judgment from their own heart and from their own investigation, rather than drawing from some other source, because that really has a smattering of fascism about it. If people are led by other people's dictatorial beliefs and views and opinions, I feel that that's nothing short of limiting the free spirit and the liberty that we all have the God-given right to explore within ourselves. So, I would just ask people to consider all of those options when they look at bands that they may be fearful of or don't understand, because it's been my experience throughout the years of being in heavy metal and rock and roll that 99.9 percent of the people are good people. They're hard working people. They're out there making music to share with other people in a positive and a non-destructive way. I would be the first to appreciate and understand the concerns of some parties by certain styles of music in heavy metal that portray maybe evil or negative messages, but I think that those types of music and those types of displays come from musi-

cians that don't really have a true understanding about what life is about. There's a tendency to do and say things simply for sensational effect just to get recognition, just to create and insite people. It really is a whole bunch of different ways of looking at a very broad sense of heavy metal and rock and roll, so even though that was a very long-winded answer to your question, I hope it gives you a bit more of an insight as to my feelings on that particular subject."

ONE OF THE THINGS YOU MADE MENTION OF: "MUSICIANS NOT KNOWING WHAT LIFE IS ALL ABOUT..." WHAT WOULD BE YOUR SHORT OR LONG-WINDED ANSWER ABOUT "WHAT IS LIFE ALL ABOUT?"

"Well, I think it's about committing yourself to doing, living the best possible life and to understanding and appreciating that this is a remarkable experience that we have to live on this planet, and that one of the greatest joys that you can experience is by sharing and giving to other people. So, that's one thing that I've always tried to pursue. I've continued to pursue."

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO THE YOUNG PERSON WHO ASKS YOU, WHEN YOU MENTIONED NOT LABELING YOURSELF AS BEING BORN AGAIN, IF THEY BROUGHT UP THE REFERENCE IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN WHERE JESUS SAYS, "YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN?"

"Well, I think that, um, one should simply appreciate the liberty of a situation where you're able to really draw on the circumstances and the higher power that is right for you. That's where I have a strong feeling about certain pre-determined or pre-ordained ways and manners that you have to supposedly go through before being accepted. I think that it really is a condition that has to be searched for in your own mind and in your own heart. It's a very easy place to get to. People think that it's extremely difficult to get to, but it's not. It's very simple way of asking and receiving peace of mind and acceptance and that it's a very rewarding and very fulfilling experience to go through, but that really, I think, is left up to the individual to make the freedom of choice, you know. And that's Rob Halford speaking, of course."

WHEN YOU AGREE

WITH THE STATEMENT WHERE JESUS SAID THAT "HE WAS THE WAY, THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE AND NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER BUT BY ME," AND YOU ALSO TALK ABOUT TOLERATING OTHER PEOPLE'S VIEWPOINTS. HOW DO YOU BALANCE THE STATEMENT THAT JESUS MADE WITH, SAY, A BUDDHIST OR HINDU STATEMENT THAT, "WHATEVER WAY THAT GETS YOU TO NIRVANA IS OKAY, AS LONG AS YOU GET THERE?"

"Umm. That's a difficult thing for me to really comment on instantly. I think that I have to give a great deal of thought to that, but I think essentially all or most religions or most types of religious faiths really draw upon one conclusion: and that's the love and compassion of all types of humanity. Again, it's a quality that I think you look for in yourself to find out what's right for you and I'm as aware as the next person of the fanaticism and the zealous and the extremism that exists within various religious organizations and groups. It certainly confuses me why those types of bodies of people seek out to use their fundamental beliefs in such a -- what appears to be -- such a negative and destructful and harmful way, but I think that, as far as getting to the point that you want to get at is concerned, again I just have to reiterate that it's all about finding what's right for you. Giving yourself the proportion of time and the proportion of opportunity to search and find these things. It might take you a day, it might take you a year. It might take you a lifetime. Some people wait until they're on their deathbed before they recant and ask for forgiveness, but I think that, as long as you do that before you actually do go to a better place, then that's all that really matters."

WELL, I REALLY APPRECIATE YOU ANSWERING MY QUESTIONS AND SPENDING SOME TIME WITH ME. I HOPE TO BE ABLE TO TALK AGAIN IN AUSTIN, TEXAS.

"Wonderful, I would very much like to think that we'll get together to see each other when we come out there towards the middle end of December. It's been nice speaking with you." **HM**

RIK FOLEY

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METAL

TRACKS

Well, we might want to change the name of this Metal Tracks column to "Personnel Changes," since that's what we usually start off with here! Big news this issue is that **Rex Carroll** has left **Whitecross**. **Scott Wenzel**, who released a solo album last Fall, will be carrying on with the Whitecross name. We've heard who the replacement guitarist is going to be and we think you'll be very pleased. (At press time we weren't given permission to make the announcement yet, but you'll see pictures of the new lineup in the next issue, I'm sure!) It's one of only a few guitar heroes out there who could possibly fill Rex's shoes (and no, it's not Tony Palacios). Okay, enough hinting around! Let's get to why Rex left the band.

"This last year and a half was a rough year for me and my family," says Rex. "I had a lot of burn-out, it was a very hard year economically, and it was a very bad year as far as health problems in my family. In addition to two people in my immediate family having surgery, there was also in Ruth's family a couple people that had major operations as well. I'm very thankful that all of that is behind us and everybody is doing well. But, at the time, it was a lot of pressure.

"I found myself in debt because of the band. It got to the point where I sensed that it was getting harder and harder for me to see the Lord blessing our efforts. On a spiritual level I could see I was working harder and harder and harder for less and less results. It was a lot of strife and turmoil. On the human level there was a lack of unity between the guys in the band and between the management and between the booking agency and with the record company. There was friction with the crew and there was conflict with concert promoters that sometimes were due to, like always, a lack of communication. Other than that, everything is fine.

"For me there was a lot of burnout that I was personally going through. Some of the other guys maybe would've caught it later on, but I think it hit me first -- possibly due to carrying more of the load over time. Not being able to get away from band activities behind the scenes was a factor. Some of my over-involvement was my own fault and some of it couldn't be helped because there was nobody else able to do some of the things I was able to do.

"There was a plan to take some

time off after this last Fall tour in '93. There had been things musically that I had been wanting to do for quite a while that I was going to do as a sidebar to Whitecross. It was becoming very, very apparent that, 'I'm never going to get to do anything else until I do take some time off.'

"After the *High Gear* album from last year, that was the end of our contract with Star Song. So, the band had actually been out of contract for a year and it was time to sign a new deal. Jeff Mosely of Star Song and I got together and we talked very candidly. He said, 'Well, Rex, are we going to get to sign Whitecross?'

"Then the thought hit me of, 'Five more years of things going along as they had been?' I told Jeff, 'To be honest with you, I can't continue with the status quo. It just doesn't work for me anymore.' Then Jeff and I started talking about some of the new things that I've been wanting to do and he just made the most fantastic offer.

"The other thing I'm doing is getting back into the producer's chair. For me, that was one of the frustrations with Whitecross. When I sat down with Jeff, he said, 'Well, what's it gonna take to work out a deal?' So, I just unrolled my little shopping list and everything that I brought up, he said, 'Yeah, we can do that! Sure, we'll give ya that.' They just exceeded all expectations. It should be a lot of fun for the next several years.

"I signed two separate recording agreements with Star Song. The first deal is with a new band. The second deal is as a solo artist. They're both five album deals. I have to do 10 albums for Star Song, so that's probably gonna take me the next seven or eight years. I'll be very busy



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to get all this stuff out, but the big difference is that I'll be working much closer to home.

"As far as visibility to people, it's conceivable that you might be seeing more out of me than before, because of the way that everything is set up now. The level of support that I've gotten from the label has been so outstanding that it's pretty incredible. So, he came through with an absolutely fantastic new deal that is going to allow me to address a lot of things that I felt needed correction in my life.

"I've been trying to figure out how I can be a normal family guy and maintain my recording and everything I do musically and ministry-wise and get out and play. Touring more efficiently is the big solution to that.

"The other side of this too involves Scotty (Wenzel). I think when you talk to him, you'll see that where he is in his heart is much closer to his solo album. That is what he is really concen-

trating his energies on. We were not done with our contract for less than a month or so when Scotty had already made a solo deal with Word Records.

"In the band it came to a point where, 'Either Scotty can leave and I'll have the band name, or I can leave and give the name to Scotty.' With everything that was going on this year, I didn't really want to get into something that might've turned into a fight about the band, so I made Scotty a generous offer and he accepted it.

With the commitments I have now, I would probably say that it would take three or four years before Scotty and I would ever get the chance to do something again. The other thing, too, is that Scotty lives in Nashville now and I'm still here in Chicago. It's tough to have a long-distance band. Those are some of the little things that all added up. It says nothing about anything that we've achieved together and what God has done through the band...and our fans are the best.

"The most amazing thing is: having gone through one of my worst years personally, how it has ended up in the last two or three months -- being some of the best times ever. I have a new group with **Jimmy Bennett**, who is a guy from Atlanta (former **Sacred Fire** vocalist). We are auditioning players for the rest of the band right now.

"Musical direction-wise, I guess I would say it's a continuation of some of the directions that **Whitecross** was going in terms of diversity. I want to cover more musical styles, but with the big difference of getting the edge back.

"I could not be more thrilled with what we're achieving. It's some of the most together stuff that I've been involved with. I'm just very, very excited about it. We don't have a band name yet, but we're scheduled to start recording in March and we'll have a Fall release. Immediately after that, I need to start working on my solo album.

"Those albums are going to be, for lack of a better word to describe it: sort of blues and R&B influenced. I have this closet **Stevie Ray Vaughan** personality that's been waiting to come out. **Star Song** is behind all of that too. They're almost as excited about those kind of albums, because the blues and R&B are real popular forms of music right now.

"I sure hope people like it, because I'm having a great time. I had a gut feeling about the first **Whitecross** album... When I would hear the tracks played back, I would think, 'Gosh, that sounds to me like other people should like this too.' I'm getting that same feeling

about what I'm doing right now.

"If we do a ballad that would go into the A/C market, I want to be able to do that -- and do it to the hilt. On the other hand, when we rock I want to get that edge back that we used to have and drive as hard as we can. We had a few signs of this diversity on the *In The Kingdom* album. One of my favorite songs on it was "You Know What's Right." That was an experiment in writing and it worked on the record and it definitely worked live in concert. Some of that is happening and I'm using the acoustic guitar a lot more. There are some things that are just different. I'm wanting to bring some blues styling into the writing. Like I said, 'more diversity.' Whatever kind of sound that I'm working in, I just want to push it as hard as I can."

So, there you have it, the low-down on yet another splitting of one band to form two. We'll keep you up-to-date on both groups, you can be sure. Now, on to other news:

One Bad Pig is still alive! Currently the band is now releasing a "greatest hits" album on **Diadem Records** that includes two brand new songs, some remixes, and even a few cuts off the band's independently-released *A Christian Banned* album. The two new tunes are "Lust" and "I Am The Chief." From March 12 to 26, the Pig is doing some weekend dates in and around Texas with **Fourth Estate**, where they're using the same format as in the **Casper, Wyoming Metal Quest** (**Kosher** and **Daniel Tucek** with **Fourth Estate's Dave Beegle** on guitar and **Jim Iltis** on drums). During the week nights the **Fourth Estate** guys plan on putting on several guitar, bass and drum clinics. For more specific info, call evenings at (512) 467-0013.

REZ and **Grrr Records** have completed their contracts with **Ocean/Word** and now will be distributed by **R.E.X. Music**. **R.E.X.** is planning a metal campaign, called "It's Gonna Be A Hard Year, And God Has Provided." It will include a sampler cassette found on counter display in stores. **Circle of Dust** has a busy schedule as far as mainstream distribution goes. The first **Circle of Dust** release through **R.E.X.**'s new deal with **Relativity** is going to be *The Brainchild Album*, which of course will be the *Mindwarp* album featuring some remixes, rerecordings and three bonus cuts. This release should be out now. Following it will be the original *Circle of Dust* album with all new recordings in the summer. At the end of the year the *Metamorphosis Album* will be released, which will only feature **Scott Albert's** material. **Living Sacrifice** will have its industrial remixes

re-released, along with remixes of their new album. **Believer's** *Extraction From Mortality* will be remixed and re-issued as well.

The lineup for this year's **Cornerstone** fest so far includes: **The Charlie Daniels Band** (seriously, folks!), **Wish For Eden**, **Tourniquet**, **Bride**, **Mortification**, **Dakota Motor Co.**, **PFR**, **Iona**, **Vigilantes of Love**, a blues jam with **Larry Howard & Darrell Mansfield**, **Steve Taylor**, and **The Choir**.

Lovewar has a bus, a sound system and are raring to go hit the road. "At the moment we are playing nightclubs on weekends until Greg's wife has a baby," says vocalist/guitarist **Tim Bushong** (she's due in February). "In the last five months we've only done one 'Christian' concert out of quite a few gigs, although that will change soon, I'm sure. **Rick (Armstrong)** joined the band not quite a year ago, and we're kind of trying new things for our live show, like jamming certain tunes out and throwin traditional jazz comps right in the middle of heaviness -- lots of experimenting at this point, and since we're usually in an 'opening' slot, it comes across slightly 'avante garde' to people used to hearing **Def Leppard**, **AC/DC** and that type of music." For booking info, write: PO Box 341, Syracuse IN 46567.

The **HELP Ministries** office, owned and operated by **Michael Sweet** and wife **Kyle**, were robbed in November. Various items were stolen, including all of **Michael's** **Stryper** costumes, his first **Stryper** guitar and a rare **Tom Anderson** guitar. All of his sound equipment, computer systems and some gold records were taken. "Whoever did it knew exactly what was there," said **Michael**. "They took everything of value, period. They cleaned me out. They took every piece of gear I have and have ever owned. They didn't even leave me a guitar pick. It's so expensive to have insurance on equipment that I couldn't afford it."

"Our biggest losses," says **Kyle**, "were the **HELP** mailing list and **Michael's** fan club list from **Stryper**. We have been able to rebuild part of the lists through the Christmas cards and letters we've received, but many of the names are gone."

HELP Ministries was formed by the **Sweets** shortly after **Michael** left **Stryper** two years ago. Designed for new Christians and those struggling with decisions for the Lord, **HELP** strives to move teenagers and young adults forward in their walk with the Lord by getting them involved with solid Bible-teaching churches where they can be discipled. The

Sweets periodically mail scripture materials along with letters of encouragement to the HELP members. "We'd like to encourage the people that were on our mailing lists to send us a postcard or letter," says Kyle, "so that we can reinstate them in our database."

Police are investigating the robbery, but there are no suspects. "So many of the items stolen were simply memorabilia items from Stryper which, should they turn up anywhere, would be very recognizable," Kyle continued. "Also, if anyone on our mail list begins receiving any unusual correspondence from someone they don't know, it would assist us in finding the parties involved."

If anyone has information concerning the theft, please contact: HELP Ministries, PO Box 2324, Fullerton CA 92633.

Modest Attraction will be releasing its debut album in Sweden this month. Called *The Truth In Your Face*, it will be released on Viva Records.

The winner of the chalice featured in the "Raise The Chalice" video by **Mortification** (from the "Grind Planets" Video Contest) was Orlando Eind from Amsterdam, Holland.

Asight Unseen have two new members, who were formerly in **Mercy**. They are: **Chris Collins** on drums, and **Dave Dayton** on guitar. Former drummer **Bert Sanchez** (who is now pursuing missions) and **Mike Longridge** have officially left the band. The new material is supposedly very hot.

Oblation has ended its search for a bass player. **Alan Tregoning**, after reading an article in *Heaven's Metal* that mentioned the band needing a bassist, contacted the band and began talking about joining the band. Now having made the trek across the ocean, Alan and band can now begin recording a new demo, live shows and possibly another video. Alan was formerly a member of the Aussie outfit **Fleshwalker**.

Phil Keaggy was recognized as one of the best guitar players in the world in the *Guitar Player* Magazine annual Reader's Poll. Keaggy came in third place in the "Best Acoustic Fingerstyle Guitarist" category, just behind **Adrian Legg** and **Eric Clapton**. He also took third in "Best Acoustic Pickstyle Guitarist" category, behind **Eric Clapton**, **Michael Hedges** (tied for 1st) and **Neil Young**.

Isaiah Matthew Sampson was born (8 lbs. 7 oz.) to **Theresa & Roger Sampson** of **Precious Death** on January 4th.

The "Testify" single from the *Tamplin* album was the first single to ever

take the number one position on the CCM Update metal charts. Unfortunately, CCM has dropped its metal charts due to "it not really meeting the needs of our Update readers," according to editor Thom Granger. This, along with the dissolution of *The Pure Rock Report*, leaves a vacuum for radio stations playing Christian metal. We're considering doing our own chart here at *Heaven's Metal*, but don't know if we'll come out as frequently as either of these two publications did (*CCM Update* comes out bi-weekly and *The Pure Rock Report* came out once every three weeks).

The "Rock For Life" Benefit Concert is to be held at Mission Viejo's Vineyard Church on February 19th. Bands scheduled to play are: **Precious Death**, **Focused**, **Plank Eye**, **Christafari**, **The Blamed**, **Cranium**, and **Poetik Justice**.

Vision of Gray's notorious Schmooze-Aid celebrates its third year as the late-night radical showcase of the GMA conference. Scheduled for April 24 to 27 at the Cannery club in Nashville, Schmooze-Aid features signed and independent artists. Plans for Inner Seeds '94 are now underway and, once again, new artists will play a large part of the South's only alternative festival. Mootown Records will soon be accepting demos for the follow-up release to the compilation CD, *in the land of milk and cookies*.

There's a Christian metal band in Sao Paulo, Brazil by the name of **Sabaoth**. They are currently seeking a bassist and guitarist. There is also a white metal fan club and a fanzine called *King's Metal*. For info, write: Osmario Marinho Mota, Campinas, Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Guardian and **Hoi Polloi** did an "unplugged" evening at Theophilus Book Store in Houston, Texas in late November. Over 1,000 people came to the show, which raised a "Miracle Mile" of pennies for newly-signed Intersound band **20/20 Blind**, members of which were involved in a serious car accident weeks earlier. One of the fans present won a Yamaha Pacifica guitar signed by **Tony Palacios**.

Legend Seven was chosen as the feature artist at the annual "Brotherhood Week" youth concert held on Martin Luther King Day (1/17) in Pulaski, Tennessee.

Rick Cua has started a new record label called United Christian Alliance Records. An interesting aspect of the label (especially if they sign any metal bands) is that each CD has "CD+2," which means there are two performance tracks at the end -- allowing singers to perform to the tracks solo. For more info on the label, write: PO Box 681567, Franklin TN 37068-1567.

Fearless Donkey Records has changed its name to **Morphine Records**. The first two releases on the label are **Don't Know** with *For Great Homemade Chili Turn Here* and the **Blenderhead** debut EP.

For those interested, our contributing editor/"The Christian And Art" columnist, **Kemper Crabb** sent in his "Staff Picks" just too late for the last deadline. His picks for top-five albums of '93 were: *The Butterfly Effect* by Steve Scott; *Killing Floor* by Vigilantes of Love; *Devotion* by Undercover; *Volume II* by Die Happy; and *MagentaMantaLoveTree* by Dig Hay Zoose. His favorite live show was **Atomic Opera**; and his favorite unsigned band was **Lust Control**.

Merciful Tears has a 7-song tape out called *Fall From Merciful Eyes*. For info, write: 308 Pine Avenue, Wake Forest NC 27587; or call 919-554-3967.

Avenger won the Jacksonville Metro Battle of the Bands on December 18th. There were three Christian and six mainstream bands competing. The band's sound is a mix of heavy metal doom and thrash.

Heaven's Hip-Hop Magazine out of Austin, Texas has, by the way, nothing official to do with *Heaven's Metal*. Thought some of you'd be curious...

Covenant Music announces that **Altar Nation** and **The Fire** have been signed to Sozo Records; **Crimson Thorn** signed to Atomic Records; and **Waterstain** signed to Quirk Records.

Covenant Music is sponsoring the New Band Contest at the New Union in Minneapolis, Minnesota. For more info, call (612) 295-3937.

Brian White and Justice recently announced two corporate sponsors for their upcoming '94 *Living In The Sight Of Water* tour: Spring Water and Sluder Floral Distributors.

The Second International Festival of the Arts is going to be held in Sofia, Bulgaria from May 3 to 8. Artists from Africa, the Pacific Islands, India, the Americas and Europe have confirmed their participation. These artists will display and perform their craft, as well as share with local artists in Bulgaria. The monies raised from the events will go to bless orphans in Sofia. For more information, write: PO Box 1150, Cambridge, Ontario, Canada N1R-6C9; or call (519) 632-8031.

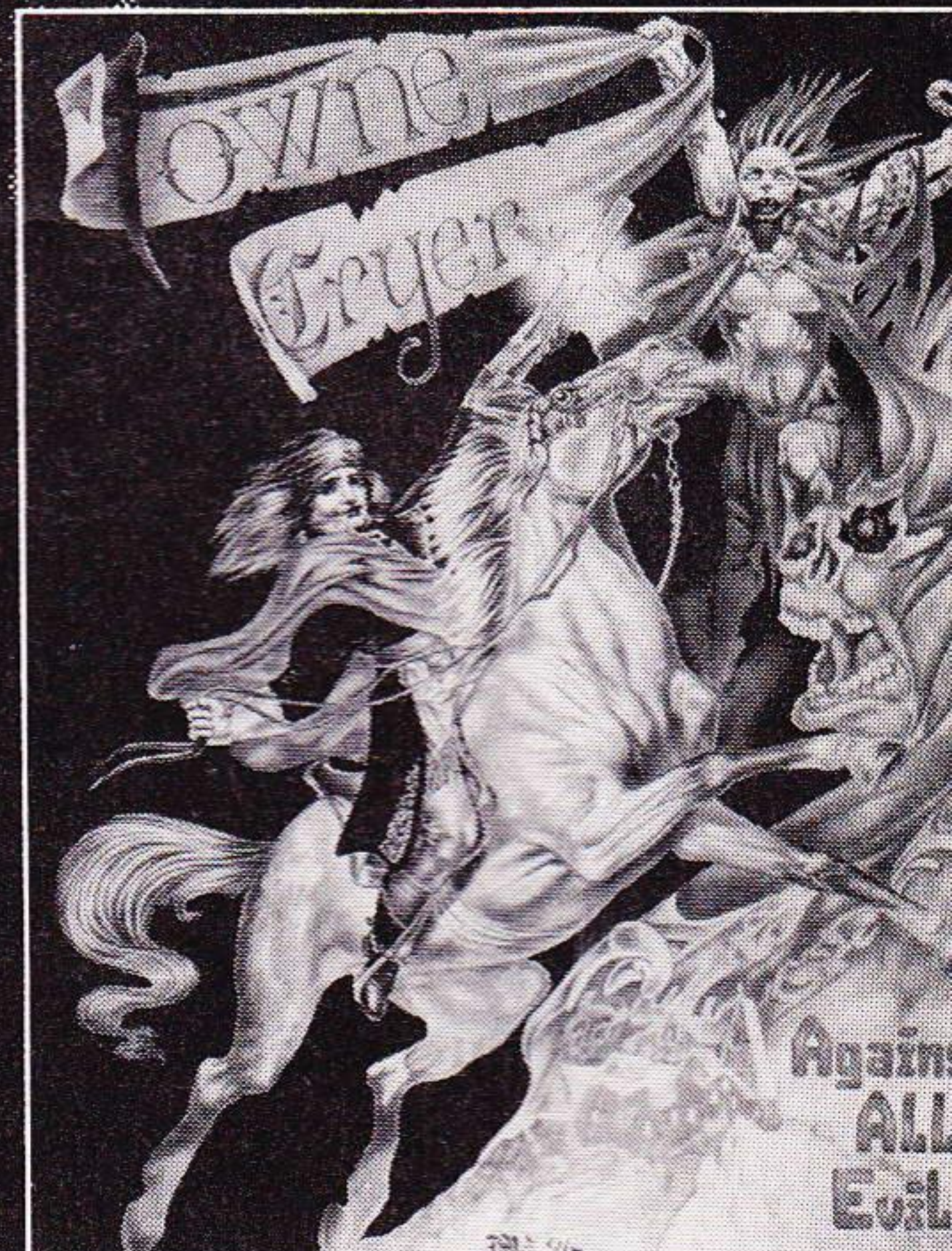
Nonpoint Factor is being produced by Chris Rutherford (Anthrax). They recorded a limited edition live tape (150 copies) that's available through A.R.T. Distribution. The band's music has been described as a mix between early Testament with Alice in Chains. **HM**

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FAVORITE ALBUM

- Miracle Mile*
by Guardian
2
Post Momentary Affliction
by Mortification
3
Dimensions
by Believer
4
The Passing
by Betrayal
5
Learn
by Deliverance

FAVORITE LYRICIST

- Jimmy Brown
(Deliverance)
2
Steve Rowe
& Jayson Sherlock
(Mortification)
3
Ted Kirkpatrick
(Tourniquet)
4
Dale Thompson
(Bride)
5
Eric Clayton
(Saviour Machine)



FAVORITE ALBUM COVER

- Post Momentary Affliction*
by Mortification
2
Miracle Mile
by Guardian
3
Space In Your Face
by Galactic Cowboys
4
Dimensions
by Believer
5
Nonexistent
by Living Sacrifice

FAVORITE SINGER

- Dale Thompson
(Bride)
2
Jimmy Brown
(Deliverance)
3
Steve Rowe
(Mortification)
4
Jamie Rowe
(Guardian)
5
Chris Scott
(Precious Death)

FAVORITE GUITARIST

"GUITAR HERO" AWARD

- Tony Palacios
(Guardian)
2
Gary Lenaire
(Tourniquet)
3
Michael Carlisle
(Mortification)
4
Lanny Cordola
(tie) Erik Mendez
(Tourniquet)
& Kurt Bachman
(Believer)



<<<FAVORITE BASSIST

- Steve Rowe
(Mortification)
2
Victor Macias
(Tourniquet)
3
David Bach
(Guardian)
4
Doug Pinnick
(King's X)
5
Monty Colvin
(Galactic Cowboys)

FAVORITE BAND

- Bride
2
Mortification
3
Tourniquet
4
Deliverance
5
Guardian

POLL -- 1993

FAVORITE UNSIGNED BAND

- Precious Death**
 2 Sardonyx
 3 Jesus Freaks
 4 (tie) Stryper
 & Paramaecium
 5 (tie) Consecrator
 & Refugee

FAVORITE NEW BAND

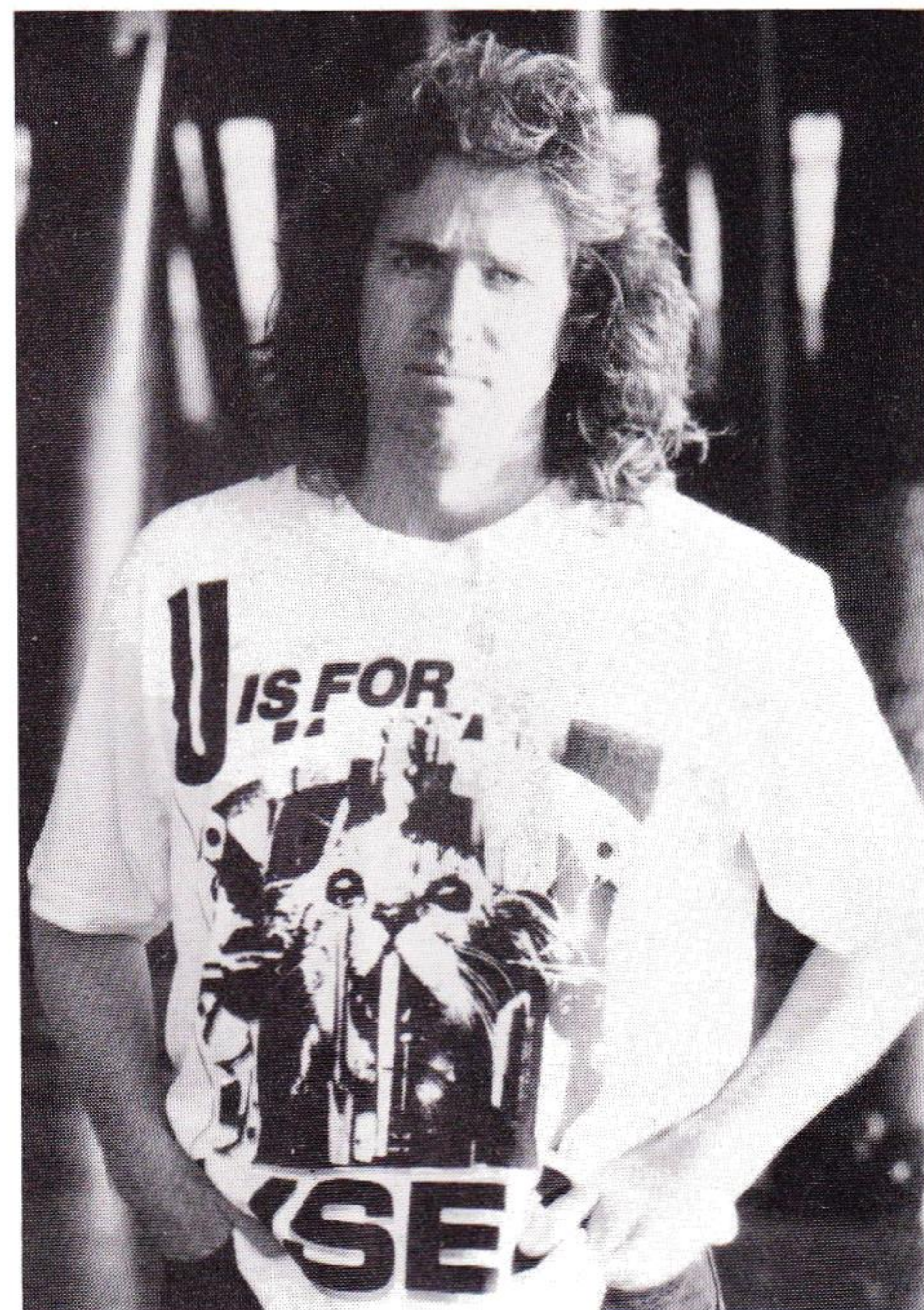
- Fear Not**
 2 Saviour Machine
 3 Killed By Cain
 4 Precious Death
 5 (tie) XL & DBD
 and Jesus Freaks

FAVORITE DRUMMER >>>

- Ted Kirkpatrick**
 (Tourniquet)
 2 Jayson Sherlock
 (Mortification/
 Paramaecium)
 3 Robert Sweet
 (Stryper)
 4 Joey Daub (Believer)
 5 Lance Garvin
 (Living Sacrifice)

FAVORITE LIVE BAND

- Bride**
 2 Tourniquet
 3 Guardian
 4 Mortification
 5 (tie) Deliverance
 & Whitecross



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 -Jeff Lott, Heaven's Metal Magazine

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What does the future hold for Christian heavy metal? Is God doing a "purging" of its ranks? Is metal still a viable music style? Is there a future for Christian metal? Why have so many bands broken up? What's going on? These are some of the questions we tried to answer as we got on the phone with several people who have been involved with Christian metal for a long time and are still doing big things: Mortification's Steve Rowe, Pastor Bob Beeman, Wonderland's Caesar Kalinowski, Michael Sweet, Tom Denlinger of Sardonyx, and Michael Betts of the newly formed Patriot Records. We got pastoral views, industry views and musical views. All were glad to comment on this sometimes wonderful and sometimes sick scene we call "Christian metal."

WHAT DO YOU FEEL IS THE CURRENT STATE OF CHRISTIAN HEAVY METAL?

"When I look at the Christian music industry right now," ponders Michael Betts, "I see a lot of changes going on. It seems that in the early days, 10 years ago, a band could release an album and then you would know that the band would be releasing another album after that, and hopefully going on tour. Things moved at a much more solid and slower pace. Nowadays it seems that things are changing rapidly."

"I think that there's a lot of good things in that and a lot of bad things. The good things are: the industry is getting on an equivalent level with secular music. I think the quality is there; the musicianship is there; and the song writing is there. Plus, you can see it in the amount of sales going on with acts like DC Talk, Amy Grant and Michael W. Smith. It's exciting to see that someone like Amy Grant can sell a million units in Target alone. You know that, as each year goes by, the industry is growing and growing."

"I also see in that growing that there's a lot of industry people that are signing acts and maybe there's not a lot of thorough homework going on. These guys seem like they're good guys, but the substance of the actual band and who they are personally and when they're in front of people is a little questionable. Any time something like that happens, that hurts us as an industry."

"As time has gone on in the last

10 years, I think there's been a lot of that out there. There's been a lot of bands that have been chewed up and spit out by business. They harbor hard feelings and they're hurt and they're lashing out, instead of taking it to the cross and laying it there and saying, 'Lord, what would You have me do next?' They're kind of falling away from the Lord and then they're a horrible example of Jesus' grace for us and stuff."

"It's a difficult thing that's happening right now, in that a lot of bands are having member changes and disgruntled members are leaving. Any time something starts growing and moving and becoming a different entity, you're going to have problems that happen. These are some of the problems that I think are unfortunate. I think they're wrong, but nonetheless they're still there."

**"It's to the place where I think it's not just a concern, but an alarm."
--Pastor Bob**

"The current state of Christian metal," says Pastor Bob Beeman, "I think is different from where we were maybe seven or eight years ago, when the whole thing started. I think what started out as a real desire to serve the Lord has really become a business to many people, and that desire's become very clouded."

"I think today in Christian metal we see a lot of casualties. There are a lot of people who have come and gone. We see a lot of marriages that have been torn apart because of a lack of communication and more of a desire to play music than to work on problems in the relationship. I think we've seen some good things and I think we're seeing some ramifications of a lack of commitment in a lot of areas too."

"I see in this industry today a lot of people who are serving the Lord without maturity, with wrong motives. I think the sin in our camp is unbelievable. There are still Christian bands touring who are doing a little too much drinking, who are having affairs on the side, who are not represent-

ing the Gospel. I think we've got some real problems because we haven't allowed the Lord to lead and the Lord to tell us 'No' many times. I see some bands that continue going after the Lord has told them to stop. I see some bands that are making decisions as to members of the band according to how well they play an instrument, instead of their walk with the Lord and their maturity in presenting the Word. I think, as far as ministers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as a whole, we have a lot of unprepared people who are not representing the Gospel as well as it needs to be represented."

"When we first started Sanctuary, it was at the very beginning of everything. Stryper was just coming out. Bands like Barren Cross, Saint, Neon Cross and Prophet and some of the old, old bands were just getting going at that time. We started out with a dream -- to disciple people and get them to a place where they would know the Lord and know how to stand. A lot of the kids this music was reaching weren't being welcomed in churches. I think we started out with a wonderful vision. I still think it is a good vision, but in the process of that vision I've seen a lot of things that have disturbed me greatly."

"I think the main problem in Christian metal," says Tom Denlinger of Sardonyx, "is that it builds wrong expectations for the people coming into the Christian metal scene. In the early days of Christian metal, artists coming in had a very clear calling, and that was to use Christian metal to build the body of Christ -- to obey Christ's great commission. That was the main focus."

"As time went on, the industry started to apply different techniques. They wanted to pay the bills, which weren't getting paid, and that's kind of like the direct result of what happens. Jesus told us, 'If we follow Him and we preach His Word, then men will hate us.' When men hate you, they don't buy your products. I think the Christian metal industry started applying more human logic to try and figure out, 'How can we sell more albums?'"

"As time goes on, Christian metal bands start writing vague lyrics and they're very artistic and relevant, but they're not necessarily evangelistic. We almost develop a subculture within

Christian

Christian metal of youth group kids that get into Christian metal because it's tough and cool music and it doesn't make 'em feel guilty. It's almost like a justified rebellion. Over a period of time we start getting musicians that come into Christian metal who have a similar, rebellious attitude towards the body of Christ.

"After a while, we look at Christian metal and we've lost our edge. We don't have that original calling to make disciples. Some bands do, obviously, but it's just ironic that the bands that are best musically most times are also very vague lyrically. That should put some alarms in people. That's the alarm I'm trying to sound. I'm not mad at those bands. I'm just saying, 'Hey, we need to reevaluate what our motives are.'

"Christian labels need to reevaluate what their motives are. If it can't work under the current system, then we need to abolish the system and start from scratch. My opinion is that the Christian industry cannot work like the secular industry works, because the secular industry centers around money. The Christian industry can't make money, because of what Jesus told us about men hating us. So, we have to do it a different way."

WHY HAVE THERE BEEN SO MANY PERSONNEL CHANGES?

"Well," says Caesar, "it's been a while since this whole thing took off and since we first got involved with Intense and with a very young, fledgling magazine by the name of Heaven's Metal with the ever-changing logo, and those bands were all a lot younger then as well. A lot of 'em weren't married and didn't have kids yet and all that. Like anything in history, there's X-amount of growth that's gonna occur. There's X-amount of naivety that's gonna just be in existence at the beginning. I think that some of the bands have just grown out of it -- in a sense that their lives have changed with family and personally to the point where they just couldn't anymore; because before the Lord they just had priorities, such as wives and children that had to come before outside ministry.

"I think that some of them have soured due to naiveness or just coming face to face with the realities of a full-time ministry or the realities of what the secular industry might be like, verses the Chris-

tian. I think there's also just a natural attrition rate of bands that came out that had a small cult following but, because of the economic part of our industry, there may not have been enough units selling for them to be sustaining a record contract on a label. Without that contract, the ministry of the band fell apart. The big picture, I think would be an overall maturing of a lot of those bands growing up. Some of them just kind of growing on to other ministries and/or growing out of playing heavy metal for a living or a ministry.

"It's been good that it's changed. Some very close friends aren't out there doing it anymore, but then again, they're not looking as good in their tight spandex or leather pants as they once were and aren't hitting the high notes, so to speak. I think it's good that they move on, instead of trying to be like B.T.O. or other groups that we know that won't let it go and they're still trying to hold an image that's 20 years beyond them."

**"I don't mean that metal is dead, I just think there's a new term for it now."
--Michael Sweet**

"Whenever I hear the term 'heavy metal,'" says Michael Sweet, "I think of old Judas Priest and Iron Maiden. The world isn't into that anymore."

"If you look at groups like some classic metal bands like Sacred Warrior or Bloodgood," continues Caesar, "that style that they were playing then...if it didn't change at all would be horribly outdated today. I don't think any of those bands would want to sound like they did 10 years ago either. If we wanna try to stay hip, we may not be calling it 'metal' anymore. It may be that it's industrial or alternative or whatever the term is today.

"If you look at the secular market, which is what we're hopefully providing an alternative to, those same counterpart groups are gone. You're not hearing 'em, you're not seeing 'em. From what I understand, bands like Warrant and Skid Row and all those metal bands --

Metal

there's no deals to be had for those types of bands.

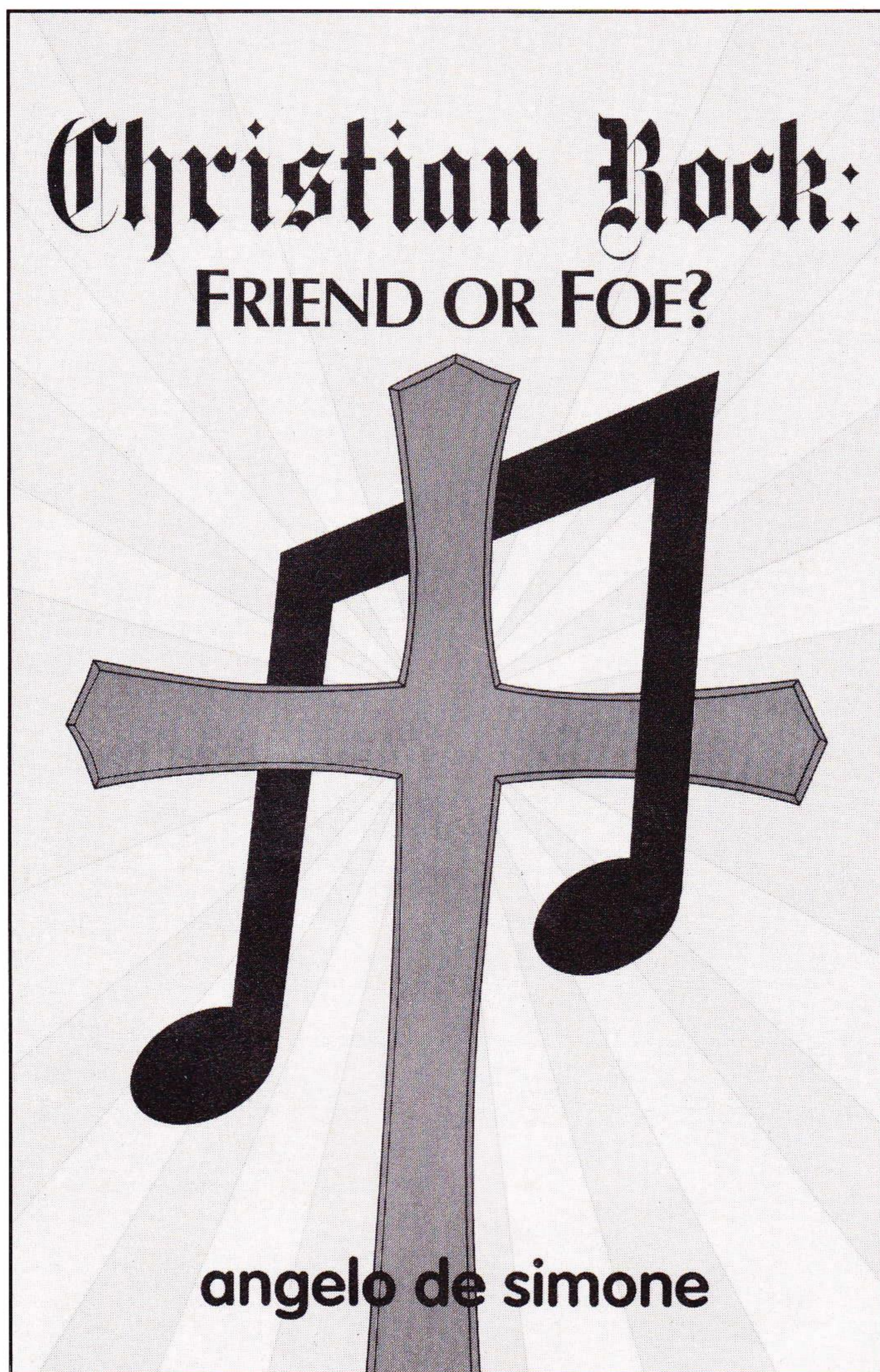
"I've had to force myself the last three or four years to get into styles of music and understand them. I found that once I did understand them, I found that I'm liking them more than I liked other things. I'm more into industrial and the variations of it than I ever was metal. It's amazing, because I find it to be so much more free -- so less trapped.

"Metal came with an awful lot of trappings and posturings. 'The drums sound like this. The singer sounds like this. This is the cool guitar tone.' All the bands had kind of a vortex that they tended to drift around. Whereas with the industrial scene, you can be as brutal as you want, as fast or slow, and there's no rules. There are absolutely no rules. That might be the only rule. That, to me, is exciting. I hope, as Christians, musically and artistically, we're going to be embracing that.

"I don't want to see this part of our industry become real old. There's no room for it, because there's no growth now. We're not selling any more metal records now than we were five or six years ago. We had an explosion of young stuff and there was some big sales, and then those high numbers kind of leveled out a little bit, because there was more quantity of releases. Now we've just kind of stayed at that number by and large. We never really grew it much.

"I don't think we're gonna change that as artists, as long as we have a sales angle that's not expanding. I mean, more and more kids probably aren't discovering bookstores as a place to buy their music. As long as that doesn't expand, we're probably gonna have a hard time expanding our sales base. That's gonna have to be expanded by an industry that desires to do that from a sales and marketing level.

"I think that it's proven itself that it's not gonna happen. Thus, the infusion of secular companies or affiliations coming in and saying, 'Hey, we know that there's roughly 100,000 or less kids that buy alternative music in Christian bookstores, but we also know that there are millions of youth group kids out there. Where do we find them? Where are they currently buying their music?' Thus lies the healthy, I think, growth into a 'let's try



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Christian Rock: Friend or Foe? deals with a highly sensitive and controversial issue that is currently being disputed within the established Christian church. Some very stern judgments have been passed on Christian rock music and on the people who perform it, but the musicians themselves, who see it as their personal ministry for spreading the Good News, have not yet been given a fair hearing.

Here from a Christian musician's perspective, are thoughtful answers to questions such as these:

- Who created music?
- Where does the Bible stand on music?
- What is the function of music for the Christian church?
- Is music an integral part of a Christian's life?
- Is "Christian Rock" a contradiction in terms?
- Are all the traditional Christian songs truly inspired by God?
- Is there any difference between secular and Christian music?
- Is the message of Christian rock songs a watered-down or shallow Gospel?
- Is Christian rock music too worldly, just another form of entertainment?
- Is Christian rock music a form of addiction or sexual perversion?
- How long has this controversy existed within the established Christian church?

Over fifty reasons provided by Christians to the author for rejecting rock music as an acceptable ministry from God are examined in detail, revealing why there is such resistance to endorsing Christian rock within the established Christian church. Each reason is discussed from a logical, musical, and most important of all, scriptural standpoint. To substantiate the discussion, 275 Scripture references are provided. The reader is challenged to investigate the points raised by these reflections and to reach his or her own conclusion as to their validity.

Is Christian rock the friend of the established Christian church, or its foe? Is it a dangerous obstacle to the growth of the church? Or is it a great tool God has given us to further the coming of His Kingdom?

The stakes have never been higher. Thoughtful Christians cannot afford to reject an authentic ministry provided by God to bring to Himself the people of this increasingly troubled world.

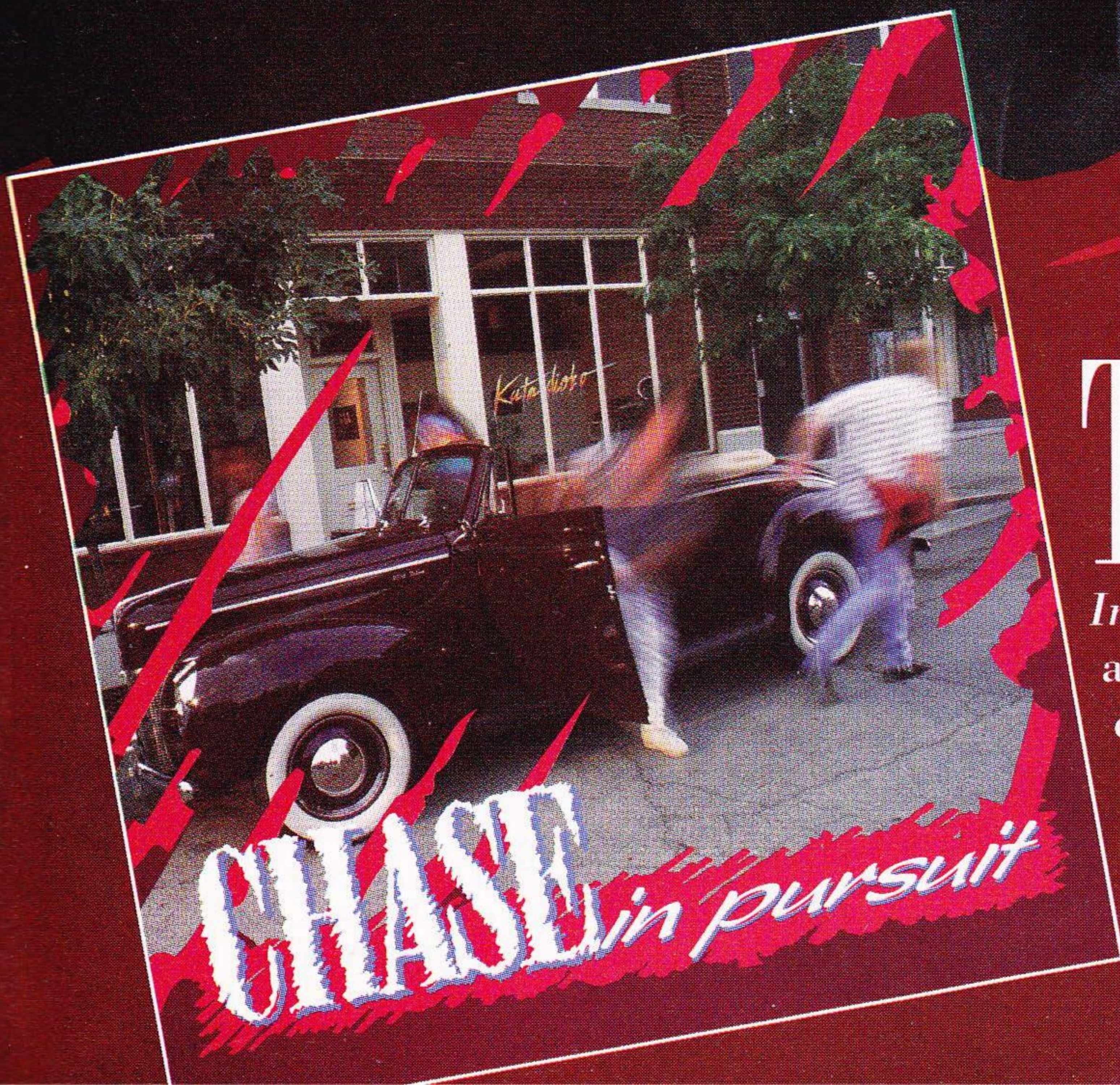
Shadows of What's to Come

The band that brought you chart-toppers like "Breakaway", "Frontline", "Pray" and many others is back! Idle Cure's *Eclipse* will soon burst out of the shadows and into your stereos. Filled with more of the great straight-ahead rock, clean vocals and right-on lyrics that's made Idle Cure a mainstay of rockers everywhere. White Heart's Billy Smiley is producing, so go get *Eclipse* and turn it up! In bookstores in April.

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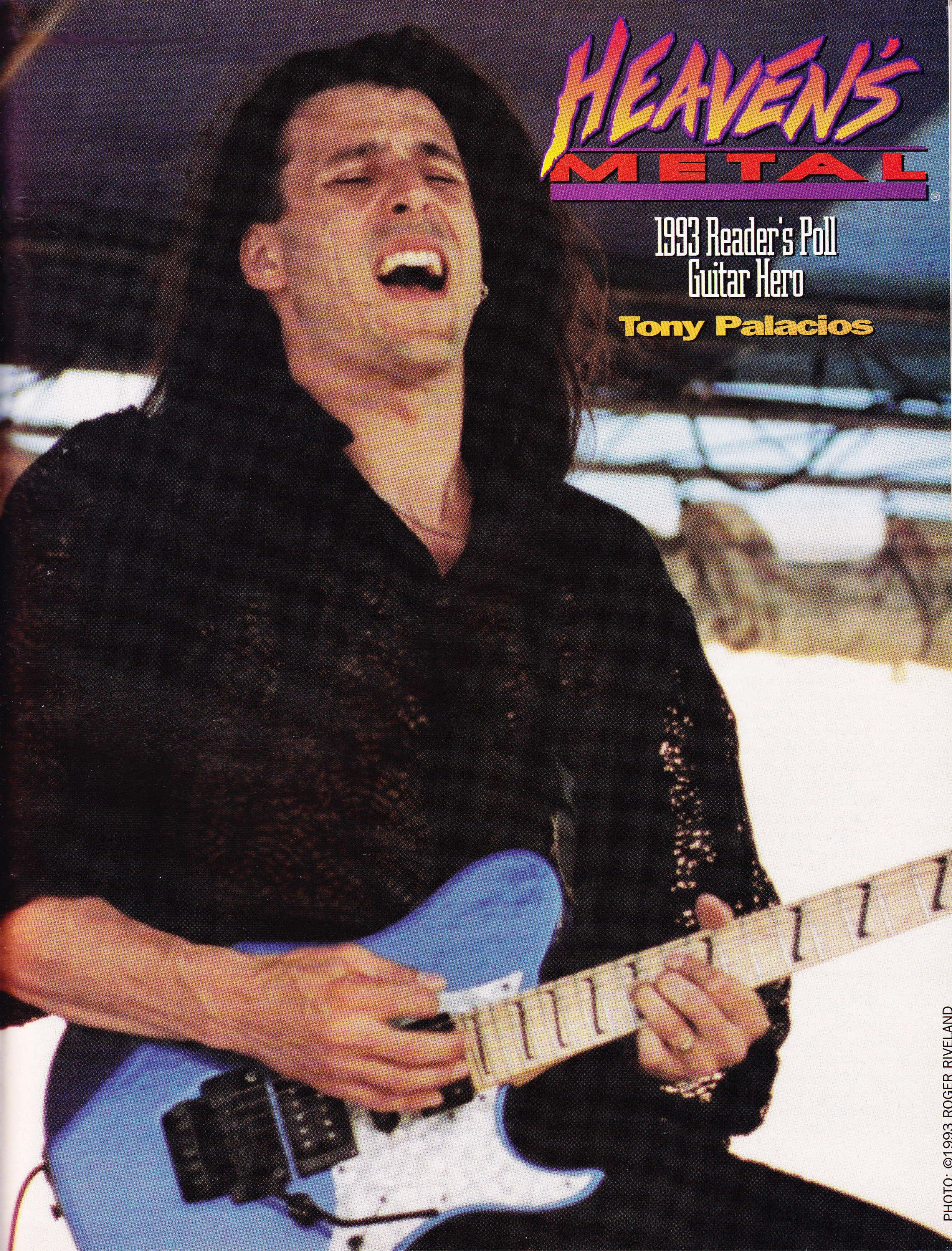
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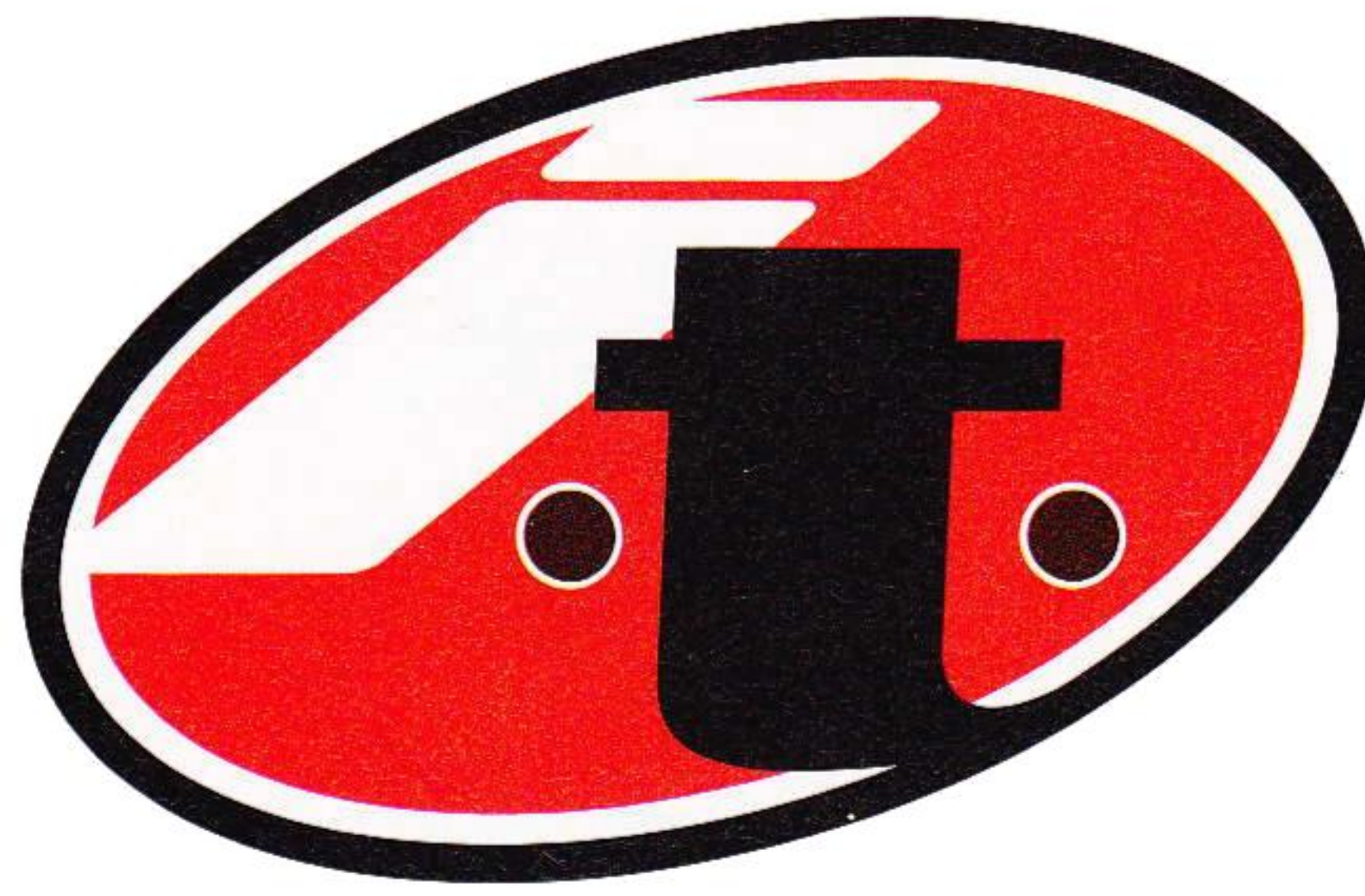
'93 READER'S POLL
FAVORITE SINGER
DALE THOMPSON

A full-page photograph of Tony Palacios, a man with long dark hair, wearing a black long-sleeved shirt. He is playing a light blue electric guitar and singing with his mouth wide open and eyes closed. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a white fence and some foliage.

HEAVEN'S METAL[®]

1993 Reader's Poll
Guitar Hero

Tony Palacios



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to mass market our product -- just like there's Bibles sold everywhere.'

"That doesn't mean it's going to be accepted by the secular market as a whole, but there are millions of people that might accept it who never knew it existed because they just never bought their music at a bookstore; much like they don't buy their clothing at an auto parts store. They don't particularly want to wear an Monroe Shock Absorbers t-shirt. They sell shirts there, and they sell a lot of those t-shirts, but most people aren't going to go there to buy new clothes. It's a real limited potential for selling clothing. I know that's kind of an absurd analogy there, but it fits."

DO YOU THINK GOD IS DOING A PURGING OF THE CHRISTIAN MUSIC INDUSTRY?

"I hope that God's always doing a purging of everything that's got His Name on it," says Caesar. "I hope that the people involved are allowing that. I don't know if we can sometimes stop God from doing a purging if He feels it's His will to do that. I don't think there's some big (he whispers) 'Oooh, smokin' mirrors. Aahh man, God's doing a big purging thing now.' I don't feel there's a big shakedown coming, where the Lord's shagging it out."

"I think that our industry as a whole is only 25 years old in its current state -- and that's really, really young for any kind of industry, be it selling motorcycles or cars or widgets or anything."

"I also think that you're going to see a bit of the changing of the guard occur. We haven't really seen that. We've seen kind of a half of a changing of the guard, from my perspective. Some of the early guys that were involved, people who started Word and some of the early labels, those guys have kind of been out of the picture now for ten years. When Word was sold about 10 years ago to ABC and then the new "Word" and Sparrow came on, that was kind of the first of the new regime. For many of us that was kind of the status quo."

"There was some younger guys back in the mid-80's that were starting more radical labels, metal labels, and you saw a proliferation of music for our age group and people that we were burdened for in ministry. Out of that era came Vengeance, Sacred Warrior, The Crucified, Whitecross, Barren Cross and Bloodgood. As some of those bands have gone by the wayside or mutated into other ministries or quit doing it altogether, we've also seen some of those same guys start labels, or even younger guys that saw what we were doing. They feel like they have a burden

for the new edge of metal, or whatever. I think we're seeing some of them coming up. I think we're just seeing a change of the guard along with some of the normal purging, hopefully."

"Personally looking back, I don't see any grand wave of extraordinary sins in particular for the metal or Christian music thing, any more than any other area of God's ministry in the church or any other para-church ministries. As long as there's people involved, there's going to be sins and mistakes and less than the absolutely best way of doing things."

"Christian metal has developed a bad name with the rest of the body of Christ."

--Tom Denlinger

"I think it's healthy to see bands go. I feel proud in a sense that Christian metal has been in an evolving state. We're not ten years later and it's still just Stryper on top and everybody scratching at their heels. Whereas, in many other forms of contemporary Christian music industry, if you look at the charts, it's the same 10 artists in the top ten charts. That's not to take anything away from those artists that have been able to sustain that growth, but people like Sandi and Amy and Carman and Michael and a handful of others -- if you look at the charts 10 years ago, it's the same ten artists. It's not their fault, but it does indicate a stagnation within the industry, whereas within the metal and more alternative styles, I think you're seeing a more natural, healthy changing and maturing of the groups falling off and splintering into new, stronger units. I think that's what's kept it fresher."

"We all have different views on what we're proud of and what embarrasses us within any given ministry, because Christian metal and Christian alternative music is all dear to our hearts, there's certain aspects of it that we're sad about or embarrassed about, but I think as a whole it's been a pretty natural moving on."

"We've seen good brothers fall and backslide and have problems, but I would say at a lesser rate than the other areas of my life where I've seen friends slip and fall through family problems and sickness, divorce and sickness and death and things like that. I don't know if I've

seen any greater falling out amongst metal musicians verses just normal ministries. Probably less, but their lives are in higher focus."

"When you're being covered and you're on the road, people wanna know what's happening with you and you won't go more than a few months without people going, 'Hey, what's going on with this guy?' Whereas in a normal church, you could probably be a normal guy and not go to church for six months and you might not get a phone call. 'Well, I don't know what happened to the guy. He must've moved.' Whereas when you're in the public eye, people wanna know when your next record's coming or what's going on."

"It's kind of a bigger deal. Not that it should be necessarily, but a bigger deal in a public sense. It's more publicized. I don't know that it's fair or bad or good, it's just the way it is. If you choose to be in a public-based ministry, there's things that go along with it. There's people holding you accountable. I don't think that's bad, though. I wish there was more accountability in personal lives through the church to that level. Obviously, we don't have magazines, video and radio and stuff to keep people accountable in their normal lives."

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE LESSONS YOU'VE LEARNED?

"One of the things we did right," says Sweet, "is we included God 100% in the beginning. We always sought God for advice and for answers and God was always there for us. We always prayed about everything we did. Going back from when we first began up to the *In God We Trust* record, we were always that way. That always came across, I think, although a lot of people hated us and ripped us apart. There was always the bold message of Jesus Christ portrayed through Stryper. I think that's the one thing that we did right. That was probably the only thing we could do right."

"We did that right and we were blessed and a lot of doors were opened and a lot of ground was broke with Stryper. We were used in incredible ways. What we did wrong was, for a period there after *In God We Trust*, we kind've rebelled and got a rebellious attitude and lost some of our time with God and kind've lost including God. We almost, in a sense, put God on a shelf. That's what we did wrong. That was the major mistake. I feel that, for a while, God was kind of sitting up there, saying to us, 'Hey guys, you wanna do it your way? Fine. Go ahead, do it your way. Let's see what happens.' We all know what happened."

"I'm not trying to bring anybody down or depress anyone, but I'm just trying to speak the truth. I feel that we tried doing it our way for a couple of years with a rebellious attitude and a rebellious heart and God took His hand off us for a while. It was obvious in what happened -- as far as the sales and the number of people we were performing to -- it just went down, down, down. I really think that, if we had continued to be as we were in the past, that God would've continued to bless, bless, bless and we just would've went up. There wouldn't have been any stopping us.

"We sold a million and a half records on *To Hell...* and we could've just kept going -- as long as we kept doing the right things and obviously changing our sound little by little to fit in with each passing year as sounds change. I think we would've kept going and going, like Van Halen or someone like that. But, unfortunately, we weren't able to do it and it came to an end.

"It's really a sad story. It really is. It's really sad for me. I know it is for the other guys as well. It's a part of history and I'm very proud of it and I'm very fortunate to have been a part of Stryper. I feel blessed to have been chosen to be a part of that group. God broke a lot of ground with us and kicked open a lot of doors that would never have been opened, I feel."

"I think that with Barren Cross and Neon Cross," says Betts, "just as in a normal everyday life with anybody, there's things you learn and things that two years from now you look back and say, 'Boy, I really made a bad decision there! I should've done this and that.' I think in both cases of those bands, who were together and doing music and eventually broke up and (are) now getting back together, I think it was kind of a case of both bands losing focus.

"I know with Barren Cross, who are my friends, they did a lot of touring, they had their albums, and they were a 'successful Christian band.' The trials and tribulations of being young, getting married, being on the road, having different business problems on the road, and not getting paid for certain things...it all is a very delicate wheel that has to be balanced properly.

"That's why I think there's so much emphasis on the scripture where you're talking about 'Do not be yoked with people that you're not compatible with,' because if you can create a team of people that have the same vision and same like-mindedness, then that is going to help you to go through the times where things are lean or a tour kind of gets on a bad leg and

something happens and dates are cancelled or whatever.

"I think what's nice is we've all matured and, in Barren Cross and Neon Cross being able to be nine years later on this and looking at it and saying, 'Okay, I've been the route. I've already been full circle. Yes, I'd like to try this again with a little bit more balanced approach, keeping my eyes on exactly why I'm doing this and what I'm doing it for, and I think that I can have something to add to this industry.' I think both bands kind of feel that way. It's exciting to be a part of this, because I'm not yoked with the first Barren Cross and Neon Cross. I'm yoking myself with the more mature, more disciplined, more focused Barren Cross and Neon Cross."

WHAT ARE SOME PRACTICAL ANSWERS?

"I think the bands need to come under the same kind of accountability that anybody does," says Pastor Bob, "that we spur each other on towards love and good deeds. That we very lovingly sit down and say, 'Where are you going? Where's your spiritual life at? How can I help you?'"

"Metal came with an awful lot of trappings and posturings." --Caesar

"Right now, just off the top of my head, I can think of seven people now who are or where in Christian bands who are getting a divorce right now. The statistics are not good. I can think of quite a few band members who have had unexpected babies in the last few years -- some of them not married. I can think of a lot of sin in the camp. I think we, first of all, need to call the people to the basics of Christianity.

"One is to learn to communicate with God on an intimate basis -- not just shoot up a prayer once in a while, but to be intimately involved with God. Secondly, I think it's important that we realize that there's no structure that's more important than the institution of the family. I think that, as a whole, the people in Christian music don't put enough emphasis on the family. When you can go out for three or four months on the road without even seeing your wife and then, when you get home, you practice four or five nights a

week and your family feels alienated and like they're just an afterthought...we're violating some very precious things in the eyes of the Lord.

"I hear, 'I put my family first,' but the wife is saying, 'Gosh, I never see him. He keeps saying that he loves me, but it seems like he loves his guitar more.' I think we've got to put our toys away and allow the Holy Spirit to do some mending and some healing in these relationships. It's to the place where I think right now it's not just a concern, but it's an alarm. I really feel like God is asking us to get our spiritual lives cleaned out, so that He can begin to use us in a way that I don't think He's ever used Christian music before. I don't think it's over. I don't think we're on the verge of defeat. I think God's calling an army and I think the army needs to be prepared."

"If somebody's serious about international exposure for their band," adds Steve Rowe, "and is willing to go the long road to make that happen, maybe a year in Bible college or something like that as a starting point is a good idea. You're facing the types of temptations and stuff that Baptist ministers and A.O.G. ministers and everybody faces. I mean, all those guys pretty much get put through the big time of testing before they're released into ministry.

"It's so easy to get involved in Christian music. You can get signed if you're good. I mean, how many people have got signed that aren't even Christians? There's companies that'll sign you if you're good, and that's the scary thing. There's not really any sort of perusal of what your church backing is or what covering you've got.

"If you're gonna start a band, get a covering for it. See if you can get a band chaplain or something. Christian metal seems prone to having sandy foundation Christians involved in it. The Christian music business is not a ministry. It's a business."

"The problem with the turn the industry has taken," explains Denlinger, "is that it has also developed a bad name with the rest of the body of Christ. Even though Christian metal has lasted the last 10 years or so, the relationship that it has with the rest of the body is still very bad.

"As the director of Lightshine, our goal is to develop credibility with local churches in this area. I battle this thing all the time, where people say to me, 'Well, Sardonyx and Lightshine are very conservative and they have a real clear, no-compromise message, but I can't trust any of these other bands.' We've seen these major bands falling into sin and we see

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division and we find out things that just appall most people. We hear about musicians whose labels knew they were in sin in their heyday and when most Christian kids thought that these bands were the next best things to their pastors, and then we find out that their integrity was never there, they never had any character -- and then this comes back into the face of Christian metal, where, 'Hey, there isn't any bands that are worth following.'

"This all goes back to say that this needs to be our approach: We need to build credibility with the rest of the body of Christ. Once we do that, they will support us and they will send us out like missionaries. I personally can tell you that it is already working with Sardonyx and Lightshine. Our goal is to develop a prototype that will encourage young bands how to do this. I've talked to several bands that said they need to have the support of their local church, but they never took the time to do it."

"I think," says Betts, "you can't look at the whole industry and say, 'You need to do this, you need to that.' I think more of the question is what are we as individuals going to do to change this industry and the integrity in this industry? Starting with, number one, ourselves personally, and then the people we are affiliated with."

"Once that mentality starts happening, then the people we are affiliated with will start trying to change the industry with the people that they are affiliated with. If we can all start gaining a mentality of integrity and honesty and purity before the Lord, then that's going to bless our business, that's going to bless the music, that's going to bless the whole industry as it is. I think we're going to see a lot more above-reproach from that. I just think it's an effort that needs to start taking place with ourselves -- each of our companies, each of our bands -- and hopefully that will start working its way through the industry and we can get through some of these growing pains and get back to the original vision and integrity of what this Christian music industry is all about."

"My advice to young bands starting out would be to seek the Lord with all their heart, mind and soul," says Sweet. "And that's it. That's what Stryper did in the beginning. We had Bible studies in our garage where we rehearsed a couple times a week. We talked to the Lord and talked about the Lord all the time. That's what it was all about. The music meant nothing. The band meant nothing. God meant everything. I think if Christian bands think

that way, God is going to bless them in an incredible way and they're gonna find themselves just out there doing it. Everything's going to fall into place. Whatever band does that, you're gonna see them. You're gonna hear about 'em and you're gonna see God blessing 'em."

WHAT DO YOU SEE FOR THE FUTURE OF CHRISTIAN METAL?

"I think industrial metal is the next edge," says Caesar. "I think what thrash metal was to the 80's, I think we're seeing industrial flavored metal coming in the 90's. I think it's a good hybrid. I think it's the next level of intensity without having to be faster; because, let's face it, you can't get too much faster than some of the groups that are already out (and still be able to hear it). Guys like Kurt (Bachman) and Marcus (Colon) are playing about as humanly fast as anyone has. It doesn't seem that speed is where it's going to go. It's going to be in diversity of sound and of utilization of sampling techniques."

"The kind of profit that we need mostly is the kind of prophets from the New Testament." --Pastor Bob

"I hope the powers to be, as they get older, I hope they stay watching that edge and staying after that and being open to things that don't necessarily hit them in their pocket right away. I don't want to see it stagnate. We've always had something special within the Christian music industry. Our little niche has been more up-to-speed by a lot. That's exciting. That's something to be proud of."

"When I look at this whole industry," says Pastor Bob, "and I have to call it 'industry,' because it's become that - of so-called Christian music, I see an industry that needs a lot of work. I see some people in it who dearly love the Lord and have a wonderful ministry, and I see others who are lying to themselves and lying to everyone around them when they talk about having a good personal relationship with Jesus Christ."

"I see a lot of people in trouble spiritually and I see an institution that keeps 'em going no matter what. For instance, if an artist starts to have some

spiritual problems in his life, he's still bound to a record contract. Instead of getting the kind of healing that he needs, many times he's forced to do three or four more albums. I think the industry, first of all, needs to be responsible. I think they need to pay attention to where the people are at spiritually and maybe worry more about the spiritual tone of the band and the individual members than they do about how many albums we can sell."

"I realize that it's a business and the business needs to make a profit, but the kind of profit that we need mostly is the kind of prophets from the New Testament that God calls us to go out and preach the Gospel to every nation. I think that's the kind of prophet we need to see mostly in Christian music. I do believe that God is calling an army today. As I watch bands form today, I see a lot of people who don't want to go that same route, who really want to make a difference for the Lord and they want to do it in a way that's going to affect people."

"Let me illustrate by bringing up one band in particular. I know there are others besides just this one, but one of the bands that goes to my church is called Precious Death. When the guys started, their whole desire was to serve the Lord, so they waited on the Lord. In fact, the band practiced for almost three years with no singer, just writing songs, trying to get ready for whenever God was going to move with them. They were just faithful."

"So many times I prayed with them and they said, 'We don't understand what God's doing, but this is God's band and if we have to wait for God to put us together, then we'll wait. And they waited for just the right singer, and when the right singer came along, they put the band together. They continued to be careful."

"They decided that they didn't want the band to get mixed up in the whole money-making scheme and get signed to a label that wasn't going to take care of them spiritually and all those kinds of things, so they waited. They produced their own album. They saved enough money to do that and put an album out on cd and cassette that wasn't even signed to a label. One of the reasons they did it was because they wanted to give a lot of them away. I think they've been an example of where a lot of Christian bands need to be."

"We need to have more of a desire to reach people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ than we do to get the contract to sell the merchandising and all that kind of stuff. The 'get rich quick' thing has probably destroyed more bands than anything has. What if God asks me to keep my day job? What if I'll never be in 'full-

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time Christian ministry?" What if I just do it on the weekends? Will I be happy? Will I be fulfilled with what God's called me to do?" I think we need more bands like that.

"That's the kind of army I'm talking about, people who are getting back to our calling. And that is to present the Gospel, the message of the cross to a dying world in whatever way God asks them to do it. I think that is going to take a lot of sacrifice on our part. I think we're going to have to change our ways of thinking. I think it's going to have to be okay for some people to not have a contract. I think it's going to have to be okay for people to keep their day jobs and say, 'Lord, I'll continue to serve you, whether I never make a dime at this or not,' and really go out and weep for souls of those people that God has called us to touch.

"I think we need to pray for God to give us the same attitude that Keith Green had -- you know, where our hearts are broken for the people that need to know Jesus Christ and that need to be set free. I do think that, when God begins to break our hearts, when He truly gives us that burden for a dying world, I think we're going to see that army in full force. I think we're going to see a lot of things happen in the industry and I think we're going to see a real movement to call the world to repentance and to begin to see God move in ways that we haven't watched Him move yet.

"Honestly, I think the best days are in front of us, not behind us. I hear a lot of people these days say, 'Gee, remember the good ole days?' I think the good ole days are in front of us. I think we've made a lot of mistakes. I think we've learned a lot of things, and I think we need to take those things and not repeat them again, learn from them and go out as a mighty army once again and begin to touch the lives of the people who are still dying and still need to hear the Gospel."

"I think the style of heavy metal today," ponders Betts "...gosh, even the term 'heavy metal' is starting to get its own subcultures now. Music is changing. Music always has changed. I can't even fathom where music's gonna be 15 years from now. I think what's exciting in the Christian arena is that, for years music was always two or three years behind what was happening right now in the secular realm. I think there are a lot of musicians in the Christian music arena that are what's happening right now and they're a credit to music, not just Christian music, but they're a credit to music.

"I think that rock will always be a format that will be strong in reaching

kids. I think that kids will always like rock. It's my own personal opinion that there is a boundary that hard, intense metal can go and, for a lot of people that boundary is different. For me, music is music, and I believe that it will always be changing. But, like it says in Ecclesiastes, 'There's nothing new under the sun,' so it's just going to be a rehashed version of what's been done. All the 70's stuff is coming back. That's what's happening with Red Sea. They're 70's music with a 90's edge. It's hot. I love it. Music changes, but sometimes it seems like it's still the same, just the packaging seems to change."

"I'm a very opinionated guy," admits Michael Sweet, "and my opinions don't mean diddley, but I think the gothic heavy metal stuff has had its day. I don't mean that metal is dead, I just think there's a new term for it now. I just feel like it's a new day and groups need to take that into account and try to be leaders and not followers who jump on a bandwagon."

**"I think the best days are in front of us, not behind us."
--Pastor Bob**

"There'll always be trends to chase," states Denlinger. "Bands like Dream Theater, Queensryche and Rush will always be putting out good music. A band like Rush will continue to fill arenas whatever they put out. Some bands will follow trends and other bands will basically try to continue to make good music. I hope that those older bands will continue to do what they're doing, while still getting better. I'm glad when people like Dream Theater come out, because they keep good metal or rock alive."

"I see a great future for Christian music in general," says Sweet. "I think people need to catch the vision and understand that we need to be sly and we need to be wise with how we present ourselves in order to make that crossover transition and reach people. I think it's very important for Christian artists, whether hard rock or whatever, to realize that it's all about reaching people -- people that need to be reached, people that don't have Christ. That's what it's all about.

"In order to do that, reach as many people as we possibly can before Christ returns, it's like we need to be wise and we definitely need to call upon the

Lord to show us how to get into those areas and do it in a wise way, and not come out with a bullhorn, preaching, 'You're gonna turn or burn!' That's not the way it's done. That's not wisdom.

"I just think, if that were to happen and people were to really think it out and really think what they need to do to cross over and get on all those secular stations and get in those secular stores and reach those people that need Christ, that Christian music would be the biggest thing ever. I really think it could be. I think it could be bigger than anything that's ever happened on this earth musically -- if everyone thought that way. I hear people say all the time, 'Well, that's not for us. Our calling is the church.' And that's cool. I respect that, but on the other hand I feel like that attitude keeps people back and holds people back from what I feel it's all about -- and that's reaching people that need to be reached that aren't in the church. I think if the mentality was to change a bit, Christian music would explode."

It looks as if Christian music may just start exploding across this world, with Bride playing to 135,000 in Brazil, Mortification touring Europe and Brazil, Deliverance getting over to Europe, Tamplin getting two-page articles in Japanese rock magazines, Guitar World opening its pages to a column on Christian metal, and record clubs like Columbia House and BMG adding Christian music to its catalog. With this outward growth, it seems the Lord is providing some inward growth to glorify Himself. I think this serves as a challenge to pursue excellence -- not only in musical disciplines, but in spiritual disciplines as well. Then the Christian hard music that people hear will have something really special inside it -- Christ Himself being formed inside the artists and industry people. May it be so!

HM

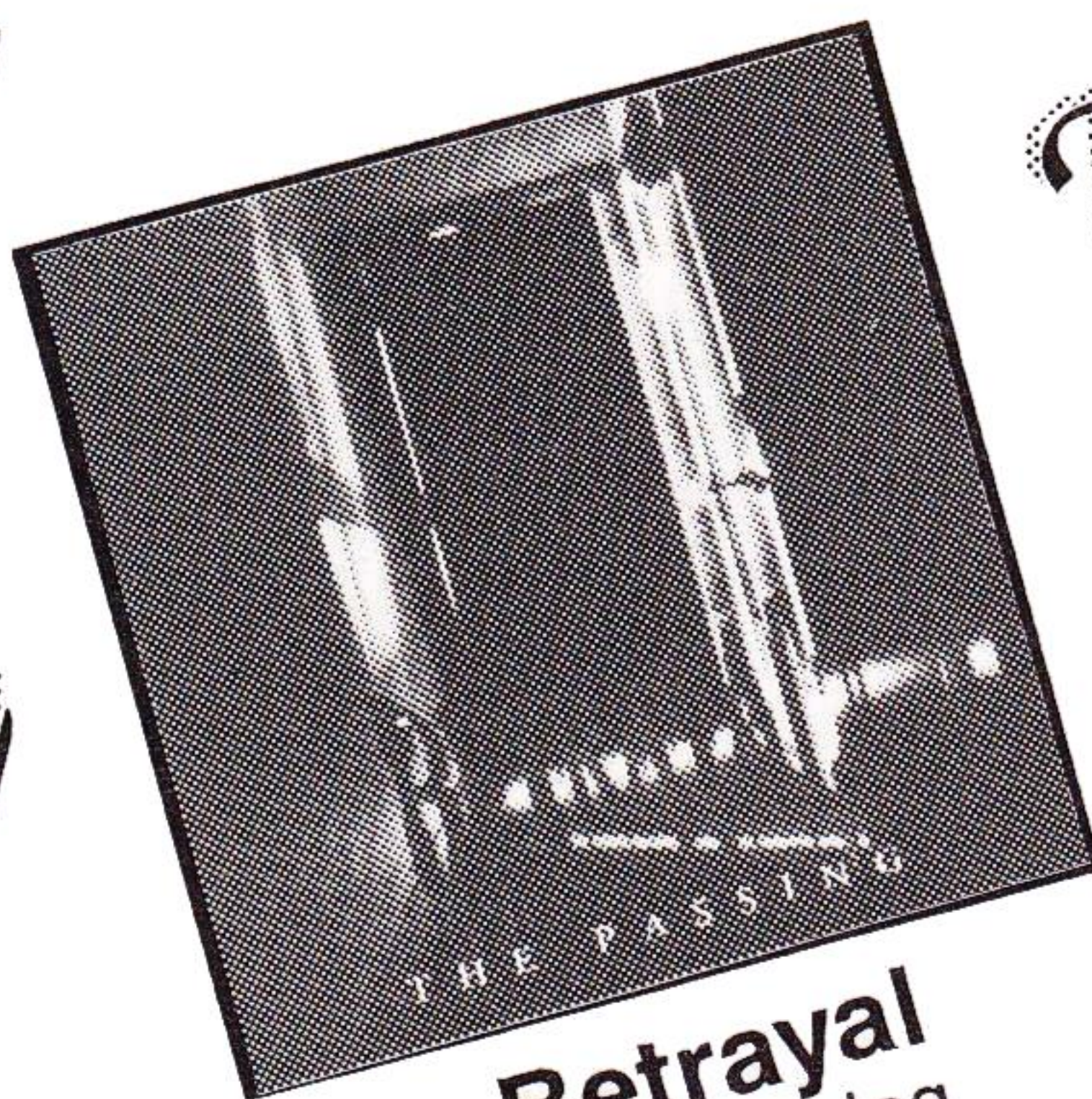
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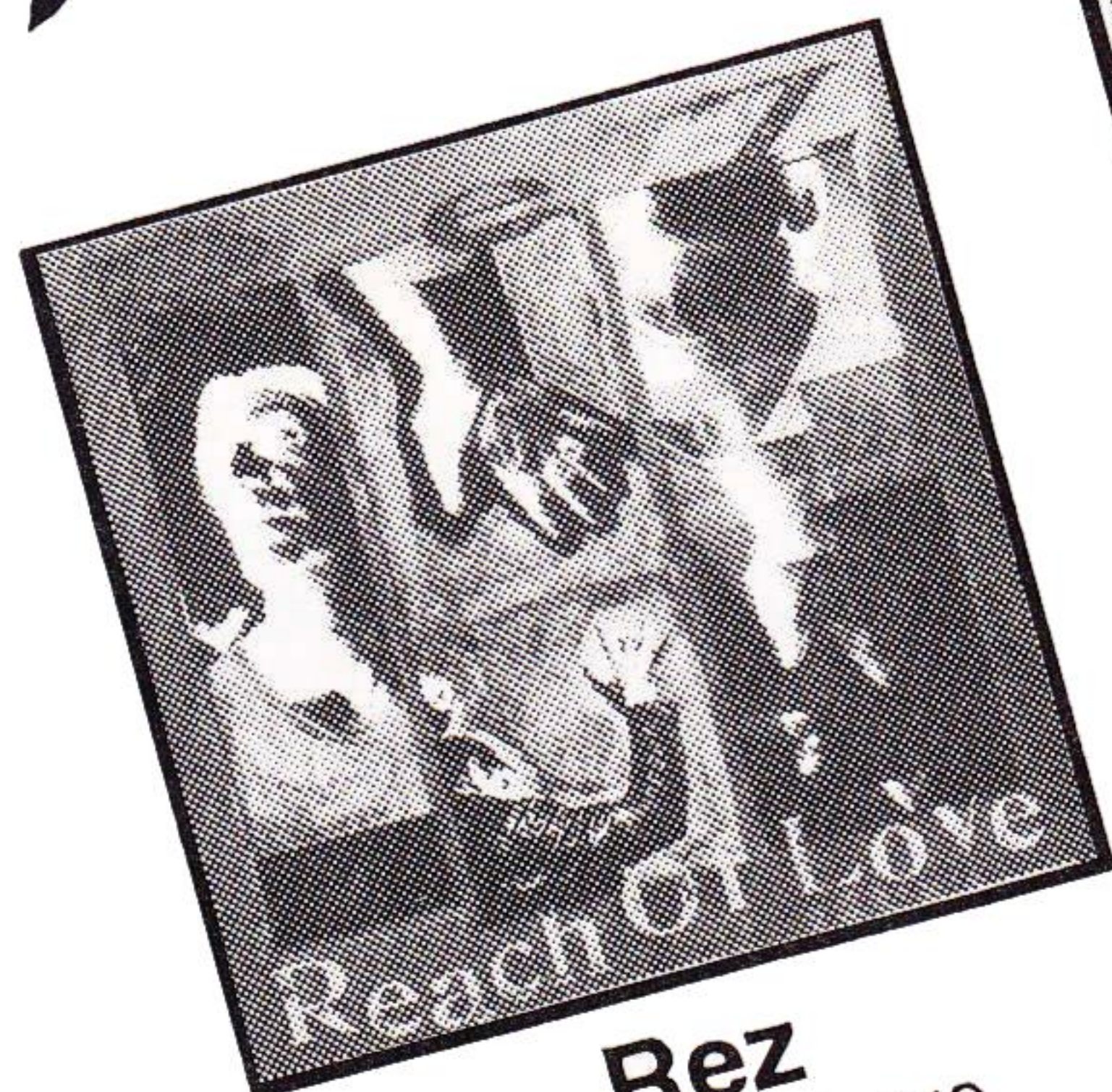
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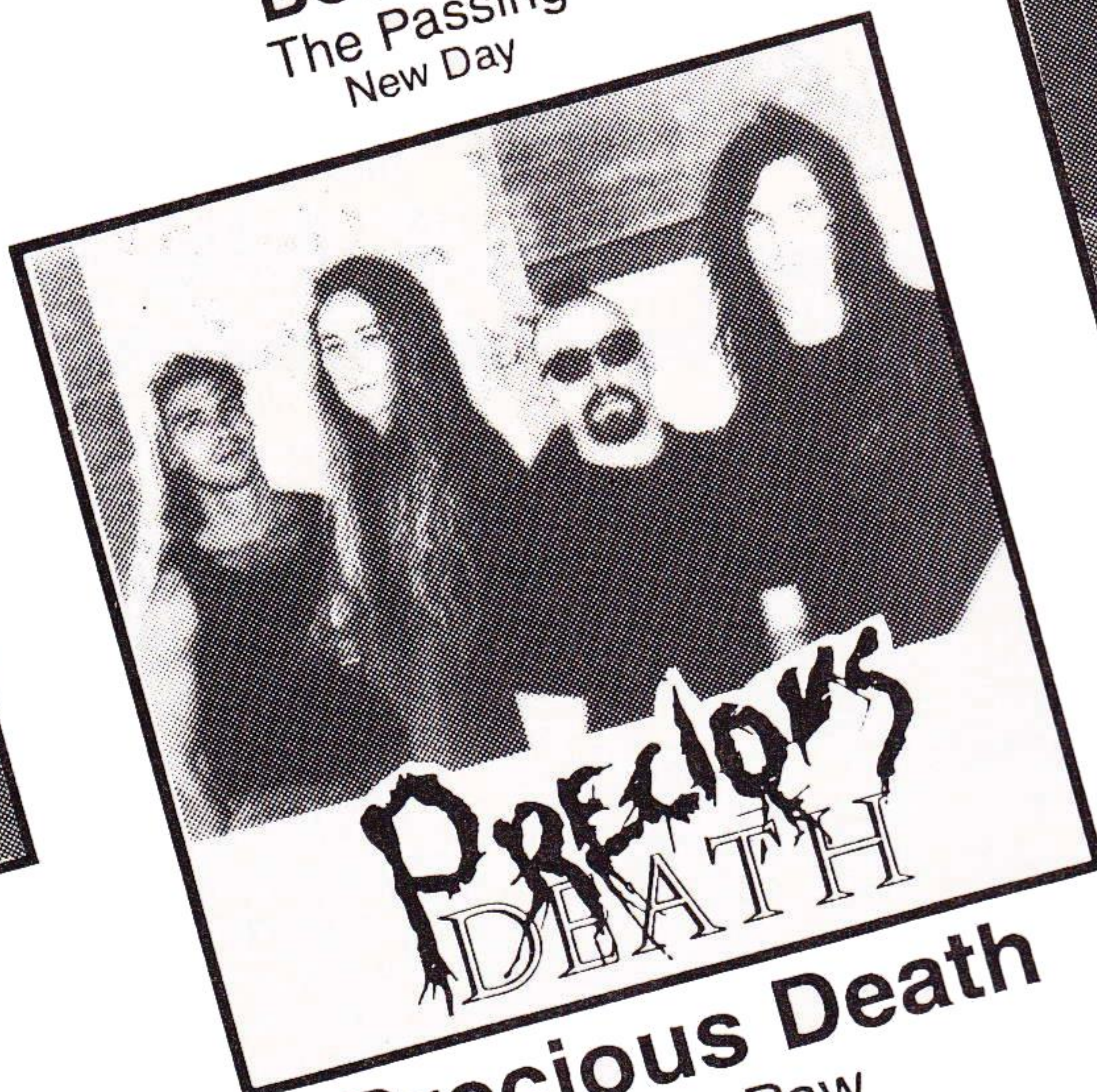
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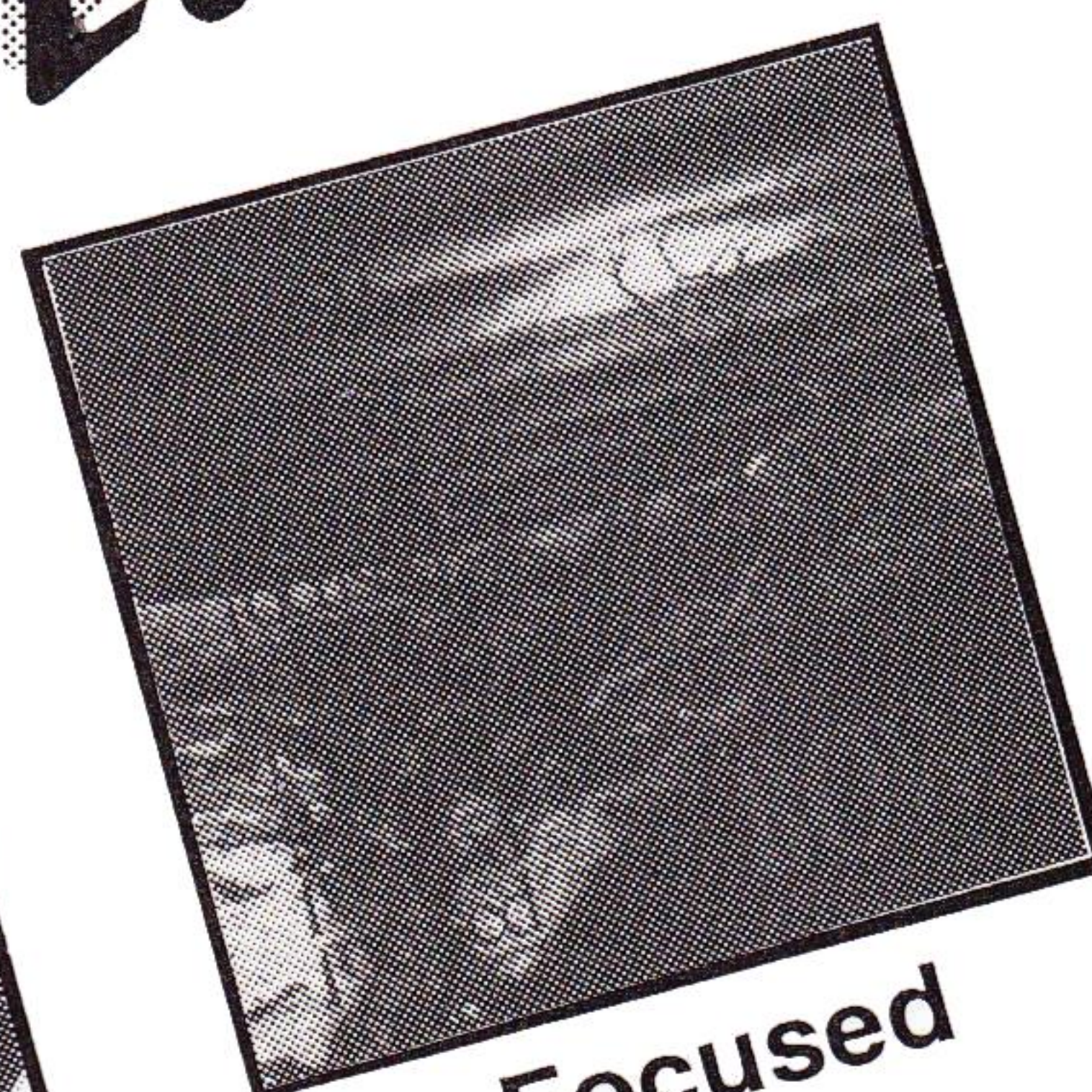
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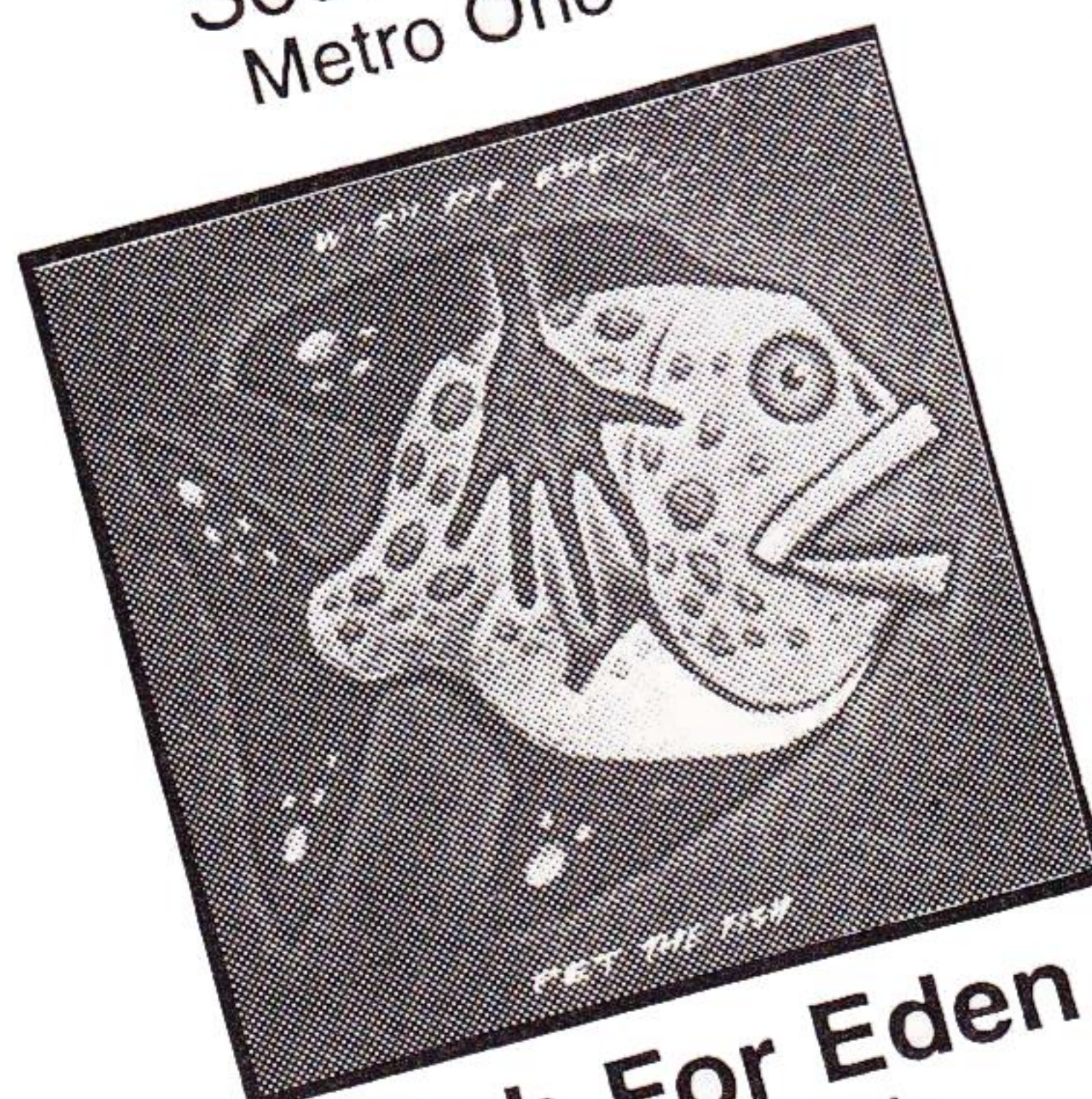


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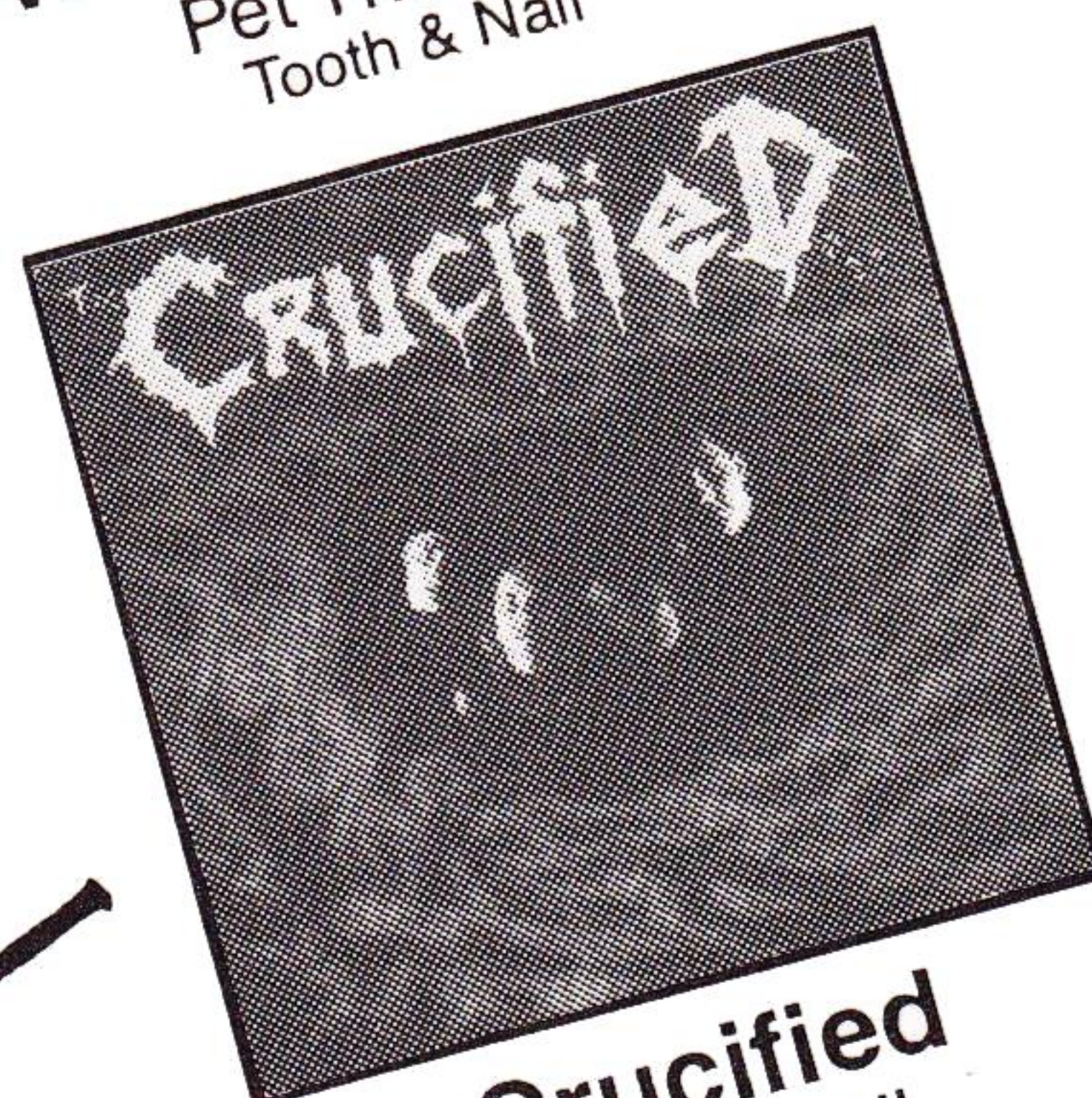


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METAL RADIO

Here are the TOP 20 "WAY LOUD" SINGLES reprinted courtesy The Rock Music Report (A brand new publication charting rock, metal, alternative and club singles on Christian radio -- filling the void left after The Pure Rock Report stopped publishing and CCM Update dropped its metal charts). For more information on The Rock Music Report, contact Sarah Mossman at 615-833-4451. These singles were reported on January 17th:

1	Renouncement	6
	Betrayal	
2	Self Inflict	7
	Circle of Dust	
3	Dust Thru A Fan	8
	Bride	
4	Future Mind	9
	Believer	
5	Who Am I?	10
	Deliverance	

The Scroll And The Lamb	20
Veni Domine	
Purity	
The Clergy	
Religion	1
Jesus Freaks	
Atonement	2
Living Sacrifice	
You're My Lord	3
Whitecross	
Testify	4
Tamplin	
Violence	5
Killed By Cain	
We Have A God	6
Fear Not	
Amazing Grace	7
P.K. Mitchell	
Fly	8
Wish For Eden	
Shine	9
Precious Death	
Heart's Desire	10
REZ	
Seeds Of Sorrow	11
Rose	
Exoskeletons	12
Tourniquet	

ROCK/METAL SALES

<i>Pet The Fish</i>	1
WISH FOR EDEN	
<i>Live Planetarium</i>	2
MORTIFICATION	
<i>Highlands</i>	3
WHITE HEART	
<i>Miracle Mile</i>	4
GUARDIAN	
<i>Tamplin</i>	5
TAMPLIN	
<i>Into The Son</i>	6
DAKODA MOTOR CO.	
<i>Learn</i>	7
DELIVERANCE	
<i>Fear Not</i>	8
FEAR NOT	
<i>Dimensions</i>	9
BELIEVER	
<i>Wake Up Call</i>	10
PETRA	
<i>Shawl</i>	11
THE PRAYER CHAIN	
<i>If But For One</i>	12
DETRITUS	

Souls In Torment	13
Sacrament	
<i>Snakes In The Playground</i>	14
BRIDE	
<i>Heart Like Thunder</i>	15
SCOTT WENZEL	
<i>Ticklewigglegigglepickle</i>	16
HOT PINK TURTLE	
<i>Reach Of Love</i>	17
REZ	
<i>Saviour Machine</i>	18
SAVIOUR MACHINE	
<i>Revolution Mind</i>	19
MAGDALEN	
<i>Ferris Wheel</i>	20
MAD AT THE WORLD	
<i>Bow</i>	
FOCUSED	

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CONCERT REVIEWS

BRIDE

On the final hour of 1993, Bride hit the balloon-colored stage in Dallas, Texas. Behind the drum kit, raised a huge ragged American flag backward as a banner, perhaps to make a political statement. The forceful aggression of "Would You Die For Me" adrenalized the audience just as what appeared to be a short-haired roadie with a reversed baseball cap and dark black sunglasses mildly approached the center mic. The main question in mind was, "Why is someone making an announcement during the first song?" Mass confusion interrupted the continuous wave of headbanging across the room as curious eyes arose in wonder from the once hair-covered faces. Belting out the vocals with that unmistakably familiar grinding voice revealed the truth -- Dale Thompson?! With short hair?! No disguise could even "Fool Me Once."

For a moment, I felt like I was slamming front stage at a Eurythmics concert -- or maybe more like Grace Jones or Vanilla Ice. The backward cap on the 5'7" vocalist strutted a stunning Michael J. Fox image. Every metalhead in sight stood paralyzed in shock. I felt almost embarrassed to have just bought four Bride shirts, especially after driving 12 hours and 1000 miles from Denver.

Whatever happened to the Bride I used to know? Beginning with *Kinetic Faith*, Bride has undergone major changes from metal to rock in order to capture a wider audience, but I never imagined it would go this far. The glorious days of *Show No Mercy* in '87 seemed to have kissed the train long ago, leaving their first album out of print forever. Troy's fiancée Michelle told me Dale can still scream like he used to; he just chooses not to.

After cranking out "Psychedelic Super Jesus," it became question and answer time. The crowd shouted up, "Why'd you cut your hair?" Then came the explanation we've all been waiting for. Dale replied, "We've been on Christmas vacation visiting our families. This is the first show we've played in four weeks, and you're the first ones to see me with my hair cut. My hair was a mess and it was always getting in my way. I had cut it once before, and I just felt like the Lord was calling me to cut it again. And I don't care if I make a million bucks in this band or not -- the main purpose of Bride is to lead people to the Lord. All the songs are written to raise questions in your minds about your walk

with God. Don't follow us, don't think that I'm anything special. We're here to show you Who God is. And all you sissies with long hair..." turning and smiling to his long-haired brother and guitarist, Troy, "not to say that it's wrong to have long hair, I just felt led to do it. And besides, we still rock harder than INXS." With that, the crowd was satisfied, and Dale proved throughout the evening that the length of his hair doesn't effect the power of his stage presence.

"Troubled Times" ripped through the night, followed by an extended version of "Hired Gun." Then, going back even further, a banner was raised to "Everybody Knows My Name," driving the wild crowd into a slamming euphoria. Next on the song list was the G'N'R-styled cover of "Knockin' On Heaven's Door," which Bride pulled off fairly well. Dale couldn't pass up the humorous imitation of Axl's nasal vocal style during the chorus by teaching the crowd to hold their nose while singing it to get the correct sound. He explained afterward why they play a song from a secular band in concert: "Because it's a spiritual song and everybody's a sinner; so don't be so fanatical and judgmental!"

"Under The Influence" had obviously re-written for live performance, containing a break for quite a long random solo, also including extra lyrics with unusually strange melodies, all eventually returning to the original chorus and closing the song.

Nearing midnight, December 31, 1993, the New Year ceremonies forced the 8-song Bride set to end short with a couple songs off the new album. Dale first announced that the new album, entitled *Scarecrow Messiah*, was recorded in October, but is not scheduled for release until June 1994. Without the new album, Bride is having trouble getting concert bookings. Dale personally urges everyone to write in to Jeff Mosely at Star Song Records (2325 Crestmoor Rd, Nashville TN 37215) and ask that the album be released sooner. With that said, Bride tore through two brand new songs, cutting the set short at 11:55 -- ending the last Bride concert for 1993 without having a chance to finish it all off with "Rattlesnake" and "Dust Through A Fan."

After the new year, Dale came back on stage to give a message of salvation, saving a half dozen people and encouraging everyone to have a closer

relationship with our Big Brother -- Jesus Christ -- during the year of 1994. Chatting with Dale afterward, he needlessly informed me that I'd witnessed a very unusual show that night. I was quick to respond, while laughing, "I couldn't help noticing that!"

--Bill Hicks

AUSTIN FALL FESTIVAL

This was the one-day follow-up to last summer's festival in Marble Falls, Texas with Tourniquet, which received such a great reaction from the several bands that traveled from out of state, like Oklahoma's *Slamcat*, Georgia's *Final Judgement*, and Iowa's *Iron Faith*. This time the show was in a City of Austin youth recreation center gymnasium. While attendance was low, several hot sets were performed. Covering all the bands in attendance would be a chore, so this review consists of the last three acts: *Slamcat* (by DV), *Final Judgement* (by Loren Vega), and *Iron Faith* (by Diane Vega).

Slamcat quickly showed this magazine editor that this band has got something special. Mixing flat-out punk energy and attitude with excellent metallic crunch and cool vocal harmonies, *Slamcat* is onto something. One of the first things people visually cue on is the attractive lead guitar player, Janna Fishback. Besides playing some hot guitar licks, this guitarist has attitude -- an asset for any rock musician, male or female. Janna and lead vocalist/guitarist Michael Soucek mix their voices for some good melodic flavor.

One song that really caught my attention was "You," from their previous demo. It starts off with a punk frolicking melody, grunts into some heavy crunch riffing that continues for some while before vocals enter. The verses are spit out with attitude and the chorus BGV's offer a very melodic and worshipful touch: "I hear You, I fear You, I want to know You." The lyrics are short and the song features some guitar playing which had both Michael and Janna doing some double leads, reminding me of the old Michael and Oz leads of Stryper. I had to split before the band's last song, so I missed seeing them destroy their instruments.

After the very cool/destructive ending thing of *Slamcat* was over, the four guys from the hrash/grindcore band *Final Judgement* hit the stage. And I mean hit! One word describes the show they put on -- HEAVY!

From the chorus of death metal vocals at the end of "Pre-life Vivisection" all the way to the last crunching chords of "Covenant With Evil," this band put on one heck of a show. Chad Cross has a very strong grindcore voice. The audience loved it, especially when Chad decided to stage dive into the almost non-existent crowd. Too bad the attendance was so low, because guitarist Nick Casler was a monster on rhythm guitar and his solos were shredding, especially on the song "Short Way To Hell." The notes sounded as if they were leaping off his guitar neck.

I also must give credit to bassist Todd Davis, who laid down the bass lines very well and kept the rhythm section tight -- along with drummer Derrick Varner. Derrick displayed some very cool double bass action and a cool solo.

Iron Faith came on to the stage with a burst of energy. Vocalist Linda Keller had a great voice. She really sounded good on "Don't Try Suicide." Drummer Steve Keller put on a great little drum solo! The band was a bit more together this show (vs. the Summer Fest in Marble Falls). The newest member, bassist Larry Weisman, seemed like he'd been in the band forever. He clicked really well with Iron Faith's guitarist, Jerry Keller. The band was really great.

--Doug V., Loren & Diane Vega

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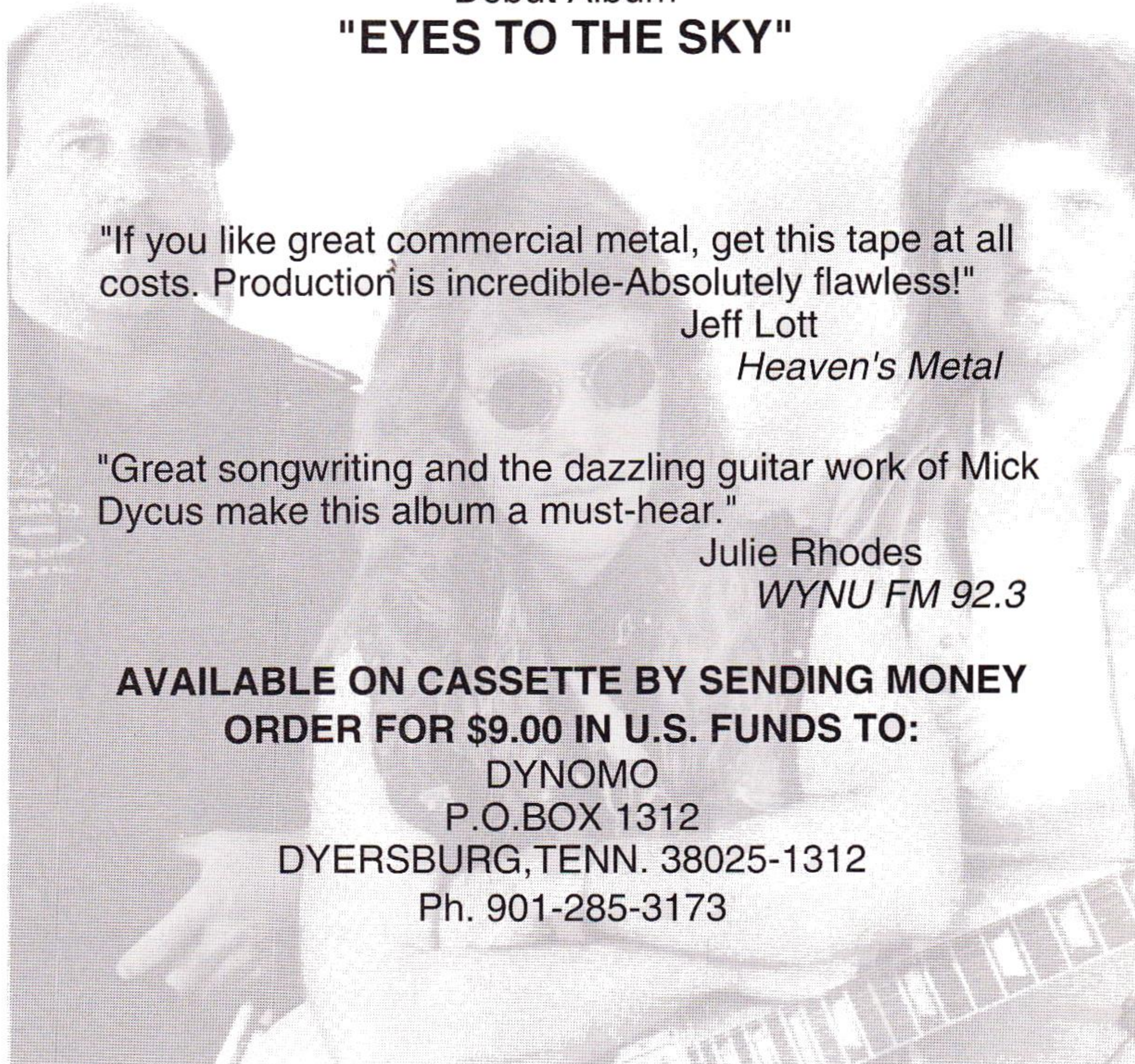
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ALBUM REVIEWS

MORTIFICATION

LIVE PLANETARIUM

Intense

The reigning kings of grind/thrash are back once again; but this time with an offering of their metal assault live. Recorded in October at the Black Stump Festival in Australia, this album is a great introduction to anyone who has not had the opportunity to see them live.

Side one starts off with vocalist/bassist Steve Rowe getting the crowd pumped up, and then goes into the album's namesake, "Grind Planetarium," and then goes straight into "Distarnish Priest." This album could really be used as a "best of" for the band, due to the structure of songs. For example, next from their debut comes "Brutal Warfare" and "Destroyer Beholds," and then "Inflamed" and the title cut from *Scrolls of the Megilloth*.

Former Mortification drummer and current Paramaecium drummer Jayson Sherlock filled in for the band, and since he recorded all the tunes originally for the band, did a superior job. Hats off to producer Doug Saunders, who has done the band's last two albums, for bringing forth an incredibly rich and full sound. The album sounds hot!

Side two brings two new cuts, "Symbiosis," written by guitarist Michael Carlisle, which shows a big Tourniquet influence lyrically, and "Time Crusaders," which is in typical fashion for the band. They salute Bloodgood by doing a great cover of "Black Snake." Yes, "The Majestic Infiltration of Order" and "This Momentary Affliction" are here, as well as "From the Valley of the Shadows" and "Human Condition" rounding out an excellent live album. After listening to *Live Planetarium*, I felt as if I just saw Mortification in concert.

--Jeff Lott

KING'S X

DOGMAN

Atlantic

Sometimes I wonder how an artist keeps creating good material. King's X is one such band. Each release always impresses me with its quality songs and strong musicianship. This album is no exception.

The title track starts off the album with a great heavy riff. The lyrics reflect, "remembering the times I pray, to let me take my thoughts away, to think about another day, to help me deal with

me..." Like the first album, a believer looking for that public confession of faith has to dig this time. This album (the band's fifth) seems to find the song writers angry. "Shoes" asks the question, "Is it still a blessed thing to live and live some more?" The song "Pretend" finds a guy upset about a failed relationship: "I take the longest walks they always do me good/I just indulge myself in sorrow singing blues...I'd rather be alone, I won't get hurt again/ I pretend." Hmmm. I guess the guys in King's X are real human beings!

The monster bass makes its presence known, along with Ty's harmonic volume knob swells in "Pretend." The song "Flies & Blue Skies" has a somber tempo that forces you to listen with some great Texas blues flavored guitar leads. Lyrically it finds the band philosophizing about living in this world: "There is life and there is death, and the difference between either one is one single breath."

"Cigarettes" has an esoteric jam with all kinds of atmospheric guitar sounds that is sure to please musicians of all styles.

"Fool You" talks about walking "in a big parade," where everyone is "trying to fool you." It makes one wonder who this generalized "everyone" is. "Don't Care" belies the fact that "I don't care like I used to," which can sometimes be good -- if a person doesn't care about public opinion -- but can be sad when it comes to not caring about another person. Perhaps a frank admission to a lack of compassion? The chorus says, "I don't care about you/ I just don't care like I used to/ I just care about you."

"Sunshine Rain" is another interesting tune. Slower than most of the rest, it comes across as a friend talking honestly with the listener. "There's a thorn in my side and I feel like I'm standing in the middle of a battlefield/ Oh Lord I try/ I walk thru sunshine rain...a friend of mine who's fallen down a million times/ told me, 'Feelings never go away/ you have to learn to live this way/ and keep yourself alive'/ that's what he said."

"Complain" is a humorous melodic and fast song juxtaposing someone with something worth complaining over and us western world people complaining over minor inconveniences. "Lots of people cryin' for a little rain/ whole nation learning how to live with pain/ I don't know how I'm gonna clean this little stain/ I complain/ so much easier."

The one song that makes the

biggest evangelical-like statement is the punk-paced "Go To Hell," which bluntly tells all that "no one in their right mind wants to go there."

A King's X first is a cover tune that appears here. Who else but another trio with a black man fronting -- The Jimi Hendrix Experience. The tune is "Manic Depression." The entire album has a live feel to it, but this one song has the sampling of a live audience at beginning and end. Doug Pinnick's voice, which takes the prominent role throughout the entire album, sounds great here.

The production difference between Sam Taylor, who had produced the band's previous four albums, and Brendan O'Brien is very noticeable. Much of the slick-ness of the King's X trademark harmonies is gone and the rawness that was hinted at on the first album and has always been there in concert is here. This album has the edge without taking away from the King's X sound. Of all the albums, this one sounds more like a "slice of life" from this moment in the band's career. Good or bad, this is King's X today. I like it.

--Doug Van Pelt

DETRITUS

IF BUT FOR ONE

R.E.X.

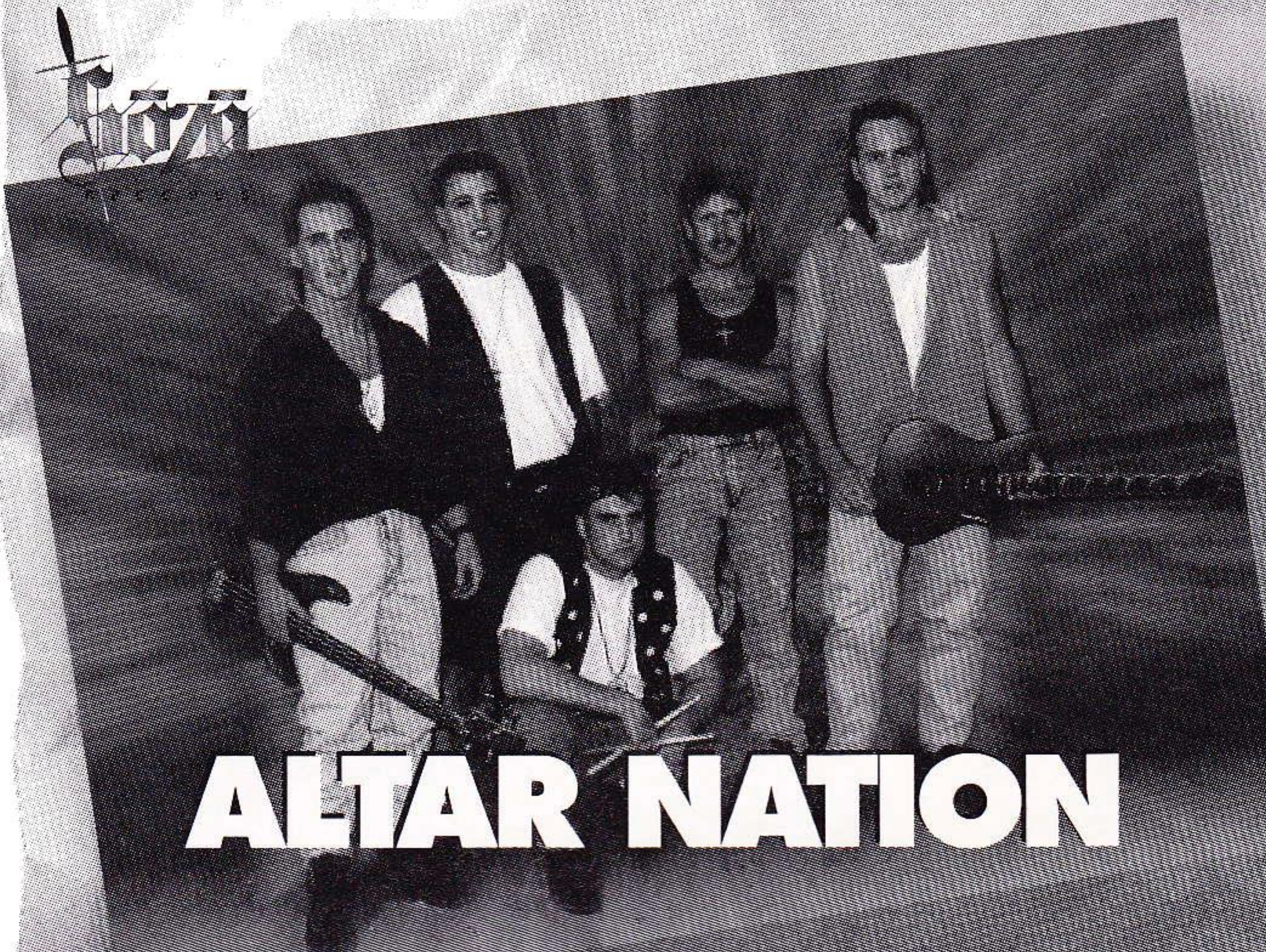
Detritus has followed up its debut with one kickin' sophomore effort. What this album suffers from in lack of promotion, the music makes up for in sonic and stylistic quality. This now-extinct British quartet put meaning behind the saying of, "Do your best for God and country," because this disc is loaded with good ole, blistering heavy metal.

Instead of merely putting in a typical speed metal showing, Detritus adds plenty of unexpected textures, accents and creative approaches. Take, for instance, the jazzy acoustic intro to "Masquerade." It's something you'd expect from a Lanny Cordola project -- plenty of great melody harmonized with some competent picking. When the song kicks into first gear, the band roars with lead guitar authority. The band goes straight for high gear once the verses hit, where bassist Mark Broomhead belts out an angry lyric. When he reaches the chorus, he slows down each note to achieve a haunting, Guy Ritter-like sound.

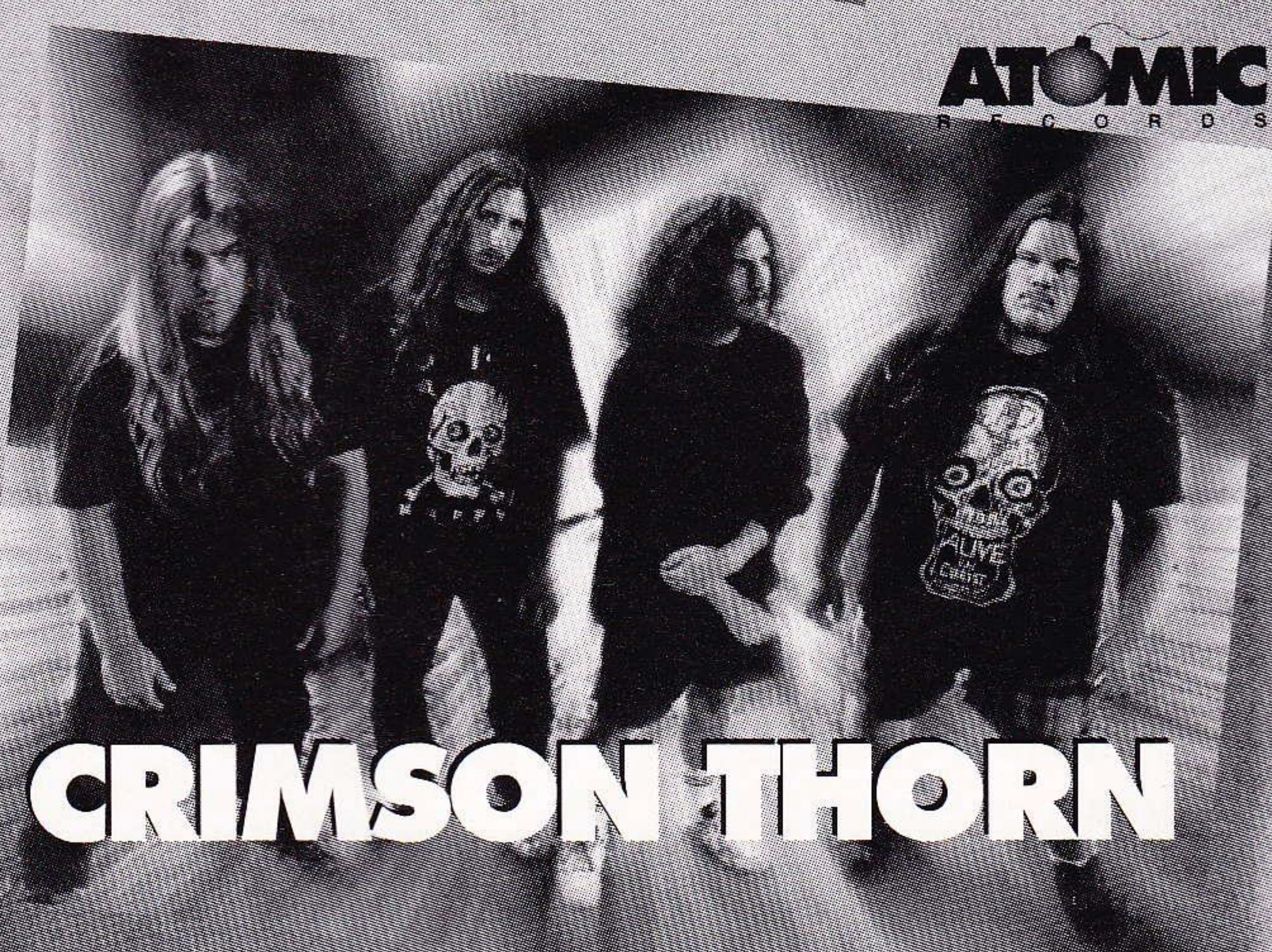
Other highlights include the gutsy "Sailor's Farewell," a sea shanty tailored after many a traditional song of

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NEW RELEASES SPRING 1994

British sailors. You can feel a merry pub atmosphere as they sing it -- making you want to hold up a mug of (root) beer and shout, "Aye-yi Cap'n" right in to your stereo as the band rocks it up.

The tones (or should I say "Ka-runch!") of guitarists Earl Morris and Andy Neal are really what make this album work. Their wall of sound will pass the Metallica-test of strength. One such example is a tune with the unlikely title "Let Peace Begin With Me." Another massive riff is in the grind-like chorus of the title track. "Father To Son" probably wins the "best riff" award, though. It's hev-vee!!

"Feel" is an interesting departure, an acoustic number with plenty of building passion -- enough to make sense on a Red Sea album. It's a cool prayer-like song that culminates in a thanksgiving praise.

Detritus deserves respect. At least this album does. I've had this disc in my deck for weeks and it's stood a time test of repeated listenings. This album is a shocker, in that it's an unexpected knockout punch from England's best Christian metal import. Shame on Kingsway Music for keeping to from these shores for over a year!

--DV

FOCUSED

BOW

Tooth & Nail

I haven't heard an album start off this powerfully for a long, long time. Opening with a passion-spitting speech that is as good an ending as it is a beginning, when this angry voice shouts the following words at you, you simply feel the urgent need to obey: "...Put your knee in the dirt and bow to the God that holds your blood red destiny in the palm of His awesome hands. It's your choice!"

What follows this slam-you-against-the-wall intro is a non-stop slamfest for 10 songs. While comparisons to The Crucified will be made, these guys still remain in their big bro's shadow. Of anyone I've heard, though, these guys come the closest to matching the intensity of a band we said goodbye to in '93.

1994 says hello to these hungry bro's who kick it out. Word has it that they're packing out shows all over the West Coast.

With this bridled aggression, it's cool to hear lyrics like, "Never use a fist, only an open hand/ Never intend to hurt, only to understand." ("Walk Beside Me") "Perfect Will" is like a "worship with hardcore intensity" (a new t-shirt slogan

for HM maybe?) song. It kills. What's really cool about this album is you can find a riff in every song to really dig on, whether it's the romping intro to "Blinded" or the slammin' staccato in "Open My Eyes."

In the tune "Forward," we hear a surprise: an acoustic intro to a hardcore song. The contrast works to make the band's unified entrance an even larger sound. Produced by Jeff Belew, this sonics are full and the guitars have that lovely nasty distortion. The vocals, though raw, are over the top and powerful. If you ever wanted to show someone a powerful Christian band, Focused would be a perfect choice. This album's full of power, intensity and energy. If you could melt this CD and packaging down, I'm sure it would smell like sweat. Focused, you're definitely alive and awake.

--DV

IMAGINE THIS

Essential Record Group

Imagine This is a band with some fresh ideas and tight musicianship. "Revolution" has plenty of spunk and R&B sassy grooves. The guitar leads from Daryl Youngblood sound akin to the wailing of Tony Palacios and Nuno Bettencourt. This high-quality jamming can be heard underneath many of the songs here. This musical strength could also be said to be a mixing weakness -- this jamming ought to be high atop the mix, knocking you against the back wall or at least blowing your mind.

"Word To The World" reveals one of the true directions of this band -- commercial pop rock. This band excels in the White Heart arena rock sound, yet plays it too soft to keep a sweating, headbanging crowd listening. "I Can't" features Daryl using a subdued effect on his vocals that make this uptempo popper a little cooler. The psychedelic harmonizer returns on "Now Is The Time" to lend an outside source to this formulaic tune. This Beatlesque approach adds the life to make the song's low energy enjoyable. "God" has the wonderful King's X/Beatles harmonies flavor. To me, this is the best song, because it's true to its style direction. "Bishop of Souls," has a power ballad feel that really throbs and works, and is probably the next best cut. "The Reason" is another ballad accompanied by classical guitar. The harmonies here with the other background vocalists don't quite jell properly, though.

"Feel The Heat" starts off with some studio chatter and jumps into a nice 'n' loud groove that joins a rap delivery.

This is a big sound that rocks real well.

"In You" starts off with a news segment sample along with a cadence drum roll. This one is a "roll the car windows down and drive" tune. This would be a great CHR radio single.

For a band that believes in revolutions, they sure didn't go as close to a hard edge as this reviewer would like; but will bring a broad range audience lots of reasons to smile.

--DV

MICHAEL SWEET

Benson

Well, it's finally here. No longer an idea or item of speculation, the Michael Sweet debut solo album is now out and available for inspection and a test drive. Apart from Stryper, what can be expected from this guy?

Departure is the first word that comes to mind. The first thing noticeable different is the thundering drums that aren't there. Instead we get an electronic drum sound. The second thing that stands out is the energy level -- this isn't a heavy metal album, that's for sure. What it is, though, is a very good collection of pop rock tunes a la Richard Marx, Bryan Adams and Bon Jovi. Michael Sweet sets the record straight on where his musical interests lie -- power pop songs with incredible melodies and perfect sonics. In one word -- class.

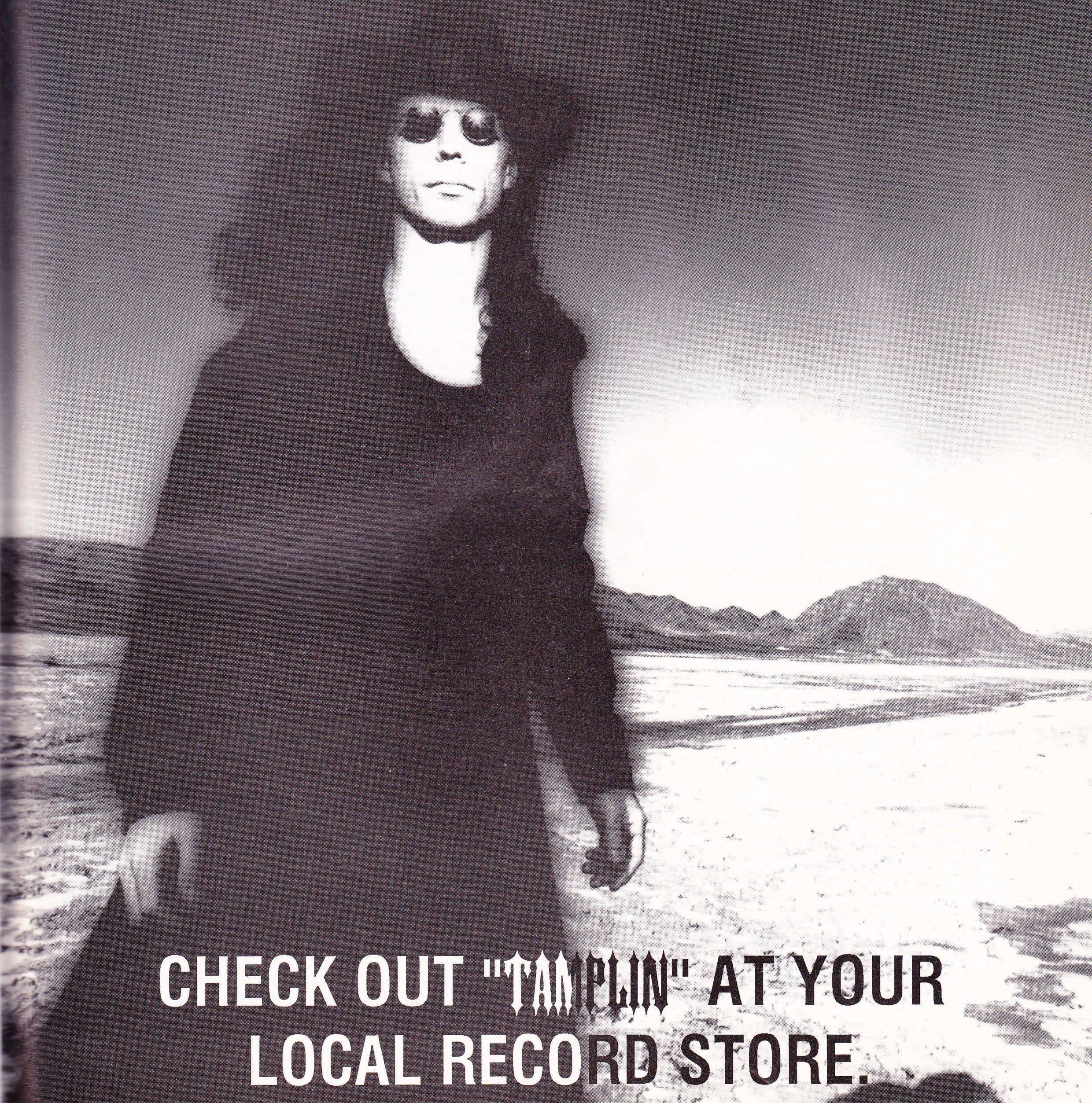
"Together" starts the album off with a rocker that's reminiscent of a Stryper pop tune (like "Calling On You"), which is mostly due to the big BGV's and melody in each chorus. "All This And Heaven Too," another highlight here, capitalizes on the same formula -- write a hook as big as day and make the chorus one big sing-along time. Radio stations (both mainstream and Christian) could have a lot of fun with these two cuts.

Lyrically, Michael spends no time in vague territory. The tune "J.E.S.U.S" sets the record straight in a cheerleading fashion. "I tell you, man, that He's alive and well/ Not a story sittin' on the shelf...put your faith in Him." This one tune doesn't stand out as a token "Christianese" tune to please the Christian market, either. The entire album is straightforward in its message. "Some-day" has a very hope-instilling message centered on the return of our mighty and loving Savior. It's the perfect pick-me-up both lyrically and musically.

Anyone who thinks Michael's lost his guts needs to hear the bold message of abstinence in "Ain't No Safe Way." It's also the hardest tune on the

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Those looking for all those killer guitar leads that they heard in Stryper will still find some great little leads; they just won't find any all-out metallers with a rhythm section running at full throttle.

"All I Wanna Do (Is Love You)" is a dead ringer for Def Leppard in the BGV category. "Tomorrow, Tonight" sounds like this British pop group in its chorus as well, but "All I Wanna Do" even cops the skip-along guitar rhythm section sound you'd hear on the *Hysteria* album.

"Forever Your" takes a more bare-bones acoustic approach a la Guardian, which really works great. Because it showcases Michael's set of pipes the clearest -- with nothing big and loud to lean on -- it gets my vote for best all-around song. It's not my favorite, though. I still like the big anthemic rockers he does, like "All This And Heaven Too," "Together" and "Ain't No Safe Way."

With all the disclaimers of "this ain't no Stryper album" out of the way, it can be said that this is one fine commercial rock album. Sure, if the average couple strolls into a record store, the girl is more likely to pick up this and the guy is more likely to get the Precious Death album, but both will find something to like on this one.

--DV

SOUL SHOCK REMEDY FISHEYE LENS

Revolution

Ever hear the name Ken Mary dropped? He played drums on both Magdallan albums, and both the first Cordola and Tamplin solo albums, as well as on albums by House of Lords and Alice Cooper. On this album he throws down the sticks and takes a hold of the center mike for a clean and creative album full of great melodic and solid hard rock. Fusing styles of jangly alternative, rumbling low-end grunge and hot arena rock, Soul Shock Remedy may just be the cure that national radio needs. This stuff kills -- all 11 tracks! And did I mention that Ken Mari (sp) has a great voice?!

The small independent Revolution Records sure has something to be proud of here. Every cut is a winner, the title track being the most memorable, followed by "Green Tambourine" and the mesmerizing ballad "Dreamz."

A worship leader at his church in Fountain Hills, Arizona, Ken's faith can be seen through a looking glass on this album, with words like: "A killing words are off the shelf/ We only try to fool ourselves/ We

place the blame on someone else/ Take a look inside, through the looking glass."

In "The Machine," he talks about the world's machine, of which he "escaped -- just in time." He also warns, "living in a wicked way will leave you blind...It's time to open your eyes to freedom."

I have taken a liking to this album, and I have high hopes for it. It's available at Tower Records or via mail-order for \$11.95 from: Sonic Fish Productions, PO Box 1482, Scottsdale AZ 85252.

--DV

POOR OLD LU MINDSIZE

Alarma

I know you don't see many hard music releases on Alarma Records, but this is the best Christian band to come from Seattle since Bloodgood. Yes, of course, these guys are riding the trendy "music revolution" wave that Soundgarden crested several years ago. Terry Taylor gives the guys a jangly, controlled sound that teeters the band more in the direction of Smashing Pumpkins or Nirvana than, say, Pearl Jam.

Guitarist Aaron Sprinkle gives the band a varied menu of sounds -- mostly drawing on the tube, wah, and fuzz sound of the 60's. Resisting the tendency to just make music for the heck of it, Poor Old Lu has a cause behind its lyrics. "Peapod" defines the lost-ness of many, "We've been tripping around so wrong/ I know we've lost our sight," while "Cruciality" exposes the futility of hippie-ness, "Enough of flower power -- step on ways that make us sour," and brings us full circle to the answer -- "this world needs the Son."

For variety, pay Poor Old Lu a visit. For heaviness, go *Pet The Fish* instead.

--DV

MARTYR WICKENSTRAUT

Tisch & Christo

You know, Martyr is a band I never got into. They were one of those bands that never seemed to get me copies of their crucial recordings to review. Now I'm discovering that I really missed out on some cool stuff back in the mid-80's. On this CD release, you'll find skull pounding thrash, some dated speed metal, and lyrics that reinforce the power of the blood of Christ and lyrics that'll make you giggle, like the satire in "Get Drunk": "Hey stupid punk, why won't you get drunk/ Maybe then all the girls will think you're a

hunk/ While you're stumbling around like an idiot/ You might as well puke and fall back in it." Besides funny lyrics, you've even got funny Anthrax-like music in "Fall On Your Face" with its punk anthem style.

There's lots of Martyr favorites to choose from here, like "Imminent Warfare," "K.K.K." and "Plead The Blood," which ex-Martyr Marcus Colon took with him to record as Betrayal. Another highlight is the skillful instrumental title track -- "H.M. Wickenstraut."

This record has a B-side/demo quality production sound to it, but the music perfectly caters to it. This is an album that a fan drools over and also welcomes tons of new ones. I mean, who could resist the Spinal Tap a cappella rendition of "Heartbreak Hotel" at the end of "Fall On Your Face?" But seriously, folks, this CD is chock full of 18 good tunes that wail. These get back to the roots of speed metal.

Right now the CD's are available in the USA only as imports for \$25 from: Tisch-Christo, c/o Christoph Stoll, Grafendeichstr. 60, D-60599 Frankfurt, Germany.

--DV

PASS-A-FIST R.E.X.

Take a band as wacky as Chagall Guevara and remove its loony front man, Steve Taylor, and what do you get? A guitar-driven, industrial-influenced college rock non-violent album called *Pass-A-Fist*.

On this album, you can hear Dave Perkins' voice, albeit distorted, talk about healing, politics, and the Christ of the nuclear age. "Glock" is the fastest and most intense song here, with its fast vocal delivery and fuzzy psychedelic guitar tone, yet it's certainly not extreme like Circle of Dust. Most of this material, like "Christ of the Nuclear Age," sounds closer to an Under Midnight sound, where a discernable melody makes itself known (ie. the hook wins). The lead-off track, "Emmanuel Chant," is cool, with its heavy, ominous and edgy sound. "Lov-E 900," sporting a humorous view of modern day "love," has another good hook. One of the biggest surprises here is the Stones' cover of "Street Fightin' Man." Mick and Keith would probably be proud of this Lou Reed style version with a Bob Dylan sore throat. Musically, you can't go wrong with a classic like this.

"The Dr. Is In," which is subtitled, "Or how I learned to start worrying and miss the cold war," features some funny sampling from the movie "Dr. Strangelove" and B-52 Bomber stat info.

SEVENFOLD

"Land of the Living"



"The best Christian rock band I've ever heard with a female singer you can listen to over and over again."
-Dale Thompson
"BRIDE"

"I haven't heard a rocker sing the name 'Jesus' like this in a long time."
-Doug VanPelt
"Heaven's Metal Magazine"

"Robert Carlton is an excellent guitarist and Sheryl Ellenberger has a wonderfully raw, but beautiful voice."
-Andrew Crump
"Heaven's Metal Magazine"

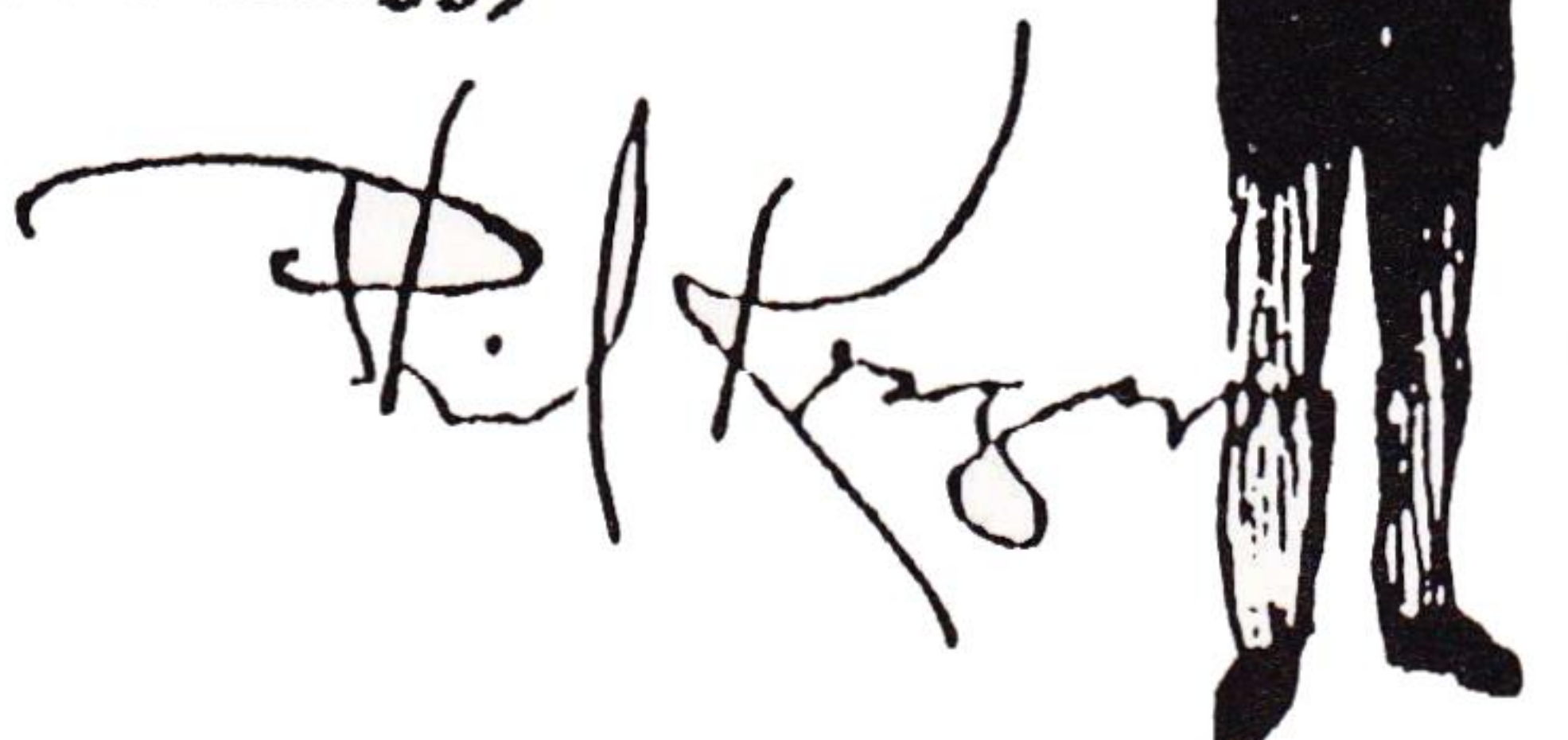
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Shoot -- these are just a couple hippies that got a hold of some 90's musical gear.

--Spiny Norman

PRIMARY CENSOR

I really dig the growth and direction of this band. They mix a hardcore edge and energy with industrial. The samples sound sort of clean and the band rips thru several time changes, but the overall production sonics stink. With the live experience the band is currently getting, we're sure to hear some high-quality production from Primary Censor.

The guitar tone of Matt Wright is a decent crunch. Too bad it's relatively buried in the mix. The best stuff we hear is the fast and frenzied drumming by Stuart Lillard. Eric Shirey's vocals are distorted, yet too low in the mix at times also.

This tape shows growth and tons of attitude, especially in tunes like "Artificial Heart," but this ain't the tape that represents their best side. To order, send \$4 to: Eric Shirey, 7905 San Felipe #254, Austin TX 78729. --DV

AFTERDEATH

Here is a hot death metal band from Brazil. I didn't expect a whole lot when I looked at a blank tape with no case and the word "Afterdeath" written on the label; but my attitude changed quickly after hearing "Credo," the first song, which, by the way, is in Spanish. The other four songs are just as heavy, but sung in English. Their grammar is not the best, but that's forgiven, cause they make up for it in talent.

Considering there is little or no originality in death and thrash metal, anything different can draw attention and Afterdeath's heritage, talent and love for Jesus is spread all over this tape. If you can get this tape, the effort would be well worth it. For ordering info, write: a/c William Teijihayashi, R. Fildmend Ribeiro, 76, Vitoria, ES, Brazil 29016-130. --JL

ARBITRAGE

Arbitrage is a one man industrial metal outfit from Seattle, Washington. That one man is Ross Assink. And what a very imaginative man he is. Some of you may have heard his first release, *Music For The Sacrifice*. It was offered through and reviewed by Heaven's Metal a while back. That was a pretty low quality recording. This new album, titled *The Healing Power Of Death*, is a lot better quality. Boy, let me tell ya, the guy can write heavy riffs! You can tell he digs the heavier industrial approaches of Skrew, Brainchild, Ministry

and Godflesh.

Full-on heavy industrial metal is what we've got here. The sounds he uses are very interesting too. I could swear, at one point, he is using a vacuum cleaner sound. The keyboard programming is a little ancient sounding; but hey, you use what you have at your disposal! The samples are pretty clear and overtly Christian.

Altogether, Arbitrage definitely has the potential to be a very good band. The record is worth a listen to. It's some nice heavy stuff. Also, he is in the middle of negotiating with industrial label Rotate Sound Productions for a full-length studio release. That should be definitely worth a listen. For a tape, send \$5 to: Ross Assink, 1319 Front Street, Lynden WA 98264. --Eric Shirey

CHARIZMA

This one has been a long time in the waiting. It is Charizma's first CD release and their first album in years. And, to my thinking, well worth the wait.

The Ultimate Call contains 15 songs, including the Charizma classics "Turn Me On" and "Take You High" (both of which could be huge hits if released by a major mainstream label stateside), a brand new version of the ballad "Where Do You Stand?" and four completely brand new songs; "Heart of the Wild," "Garden of Eden - Part 1," "Garden of Eden - Part 2" and "Always the Same," as well as the demo classic "One Life To Live" and all eight songs from their latest demo, *Heaven Can't Wait*.

"Heart of the Wild" has an infectious groove to it with a memorable sing-along chorus. "Turn Me On" and "Take You High" are remarkable radio anthem classics, while "One Life To Live" is slower and more guitar-oriented with a chorus that hooks you in. Another newie, "Garden of Eden - Part 2," like "Heart of the Wild" is driven by an infectious groove and guitar riff with a can't-miss chorus. "Longing for Heaven" and "Feels Like I'm In Heaven" bring us back to the classic keyboard-driven Charizma sound. This is truly an incredible record! Charizma's release in my opinion sets the standard for Christian hard rock in 1994. These guys have put together a release with vocal and lyrical hooks unmatched in Christian hard rock since Stryper's *To Hell With The Devil* album. This is a must-own record for hard rock fans and an easy Top 5 pick for 1994. Maybe even a 1, 2 or 3. Man, these Swedes are hot.

For ordering info, write: Daniel

Nordstrom, Kravattvagen 47, 904 40 Roback, Sweden.

--Dave Muttillio

GLENN ROWLANDS

11 songs in total from the light side of acoustic style to alternative rock to the heavier side (like a Bon Jovi or Vince Neil ballad). Glenn Rowlands from the band Wicked's End is an artist which enjoys the gift of music. What else is about to happen if you spend your evenings and says off in a studio? Like, in Glenn's case, you get an 11-song project.

Three songs stuck out to me. The first being "Help Me Understand." This song just has enough good melody to make you hum along once you hear the vocals. The intro is a bit long. "Reign On Me" starts off with a mellow intro, yet picks up to a moving chorus that could feel like a worship anthem. "I Don't Have Anything" has a cool percussion feel, kind of tribal, yet, like all three cuts, they do kick in with that light to medium rock rhythm. Overall, there are at least three tunes that rock and the rest is a break to an acoustic experience. Glenn is on with a style that draws your attention. My biggest comment is to say, "Glenn, keep on recording what's on your heart." And, to the fans, "Enjoy!" --P.G. Kidd

DOUBLE EDGE

This band seems to get better and better. The title cut is the only tune here, and it's definitely the best I've heard from them. My only complaint is that I wish the guitar leads would have been longer. Otherwise, great vocals (which are very Survivor sounding), great BGV's, outstanding musicianship, and excellent production.

If you enjoy great commercial metal, here is a band that will blow you away! For info, write: 10 Brief Rd, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M6L-2S7. (JL)

STONE DEAF

These guys are quite aggressive! Once you can overlook the poor production, it's easy to see that Gabe Lane, vocalist/guitarist/lyricist, along with Chris Latimer on drums and some guy named Eric on bass are quite talented. The title track starts off the tape, and is lyrically a prophetic tune. The music is quite heavy throughout the five song tape. It is very much straight-ahead metal, except for "Perfect Love," which is industrial.

Good effort. If they can overcome the production jinx, there would definitely be something to enjoy here. To order, send \$2.25 to: Box 1756, Hemet CA 92546. --JL

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* **Help me!** My 1994 Resolution is to meet people. I'd like to hear from ya. I attend college, work, love music, love sports and have lived all over the world, so we are bound to have something in common! If ya would like to be my pen pal, write to: Michelle Snow, 2 Beech Tree Lane, South Easton, MA 02375-1520..

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* There are a few **Back Issues** of HM available. They are: #20 (Sacred Warrior); #22 (Bloodgood); #25 (Whitecross); #28 (Believer); #29 (Jet Circus); #31 (X-Sinner); #32 (Crucified); #33 (Holy Soldier); #34 (Lanny Cordola); #35 (Novella); #36 (REZ); #37 (Tourniquet); #38 (Bride); #40 (Guardian); #41 (Mortification); #42 (Believer); and #45 (Barren Cross). All others are sold out. Each copy is \$2.95 (Canadian/Foreign orders add \$3 per copy for Air Mail postage).

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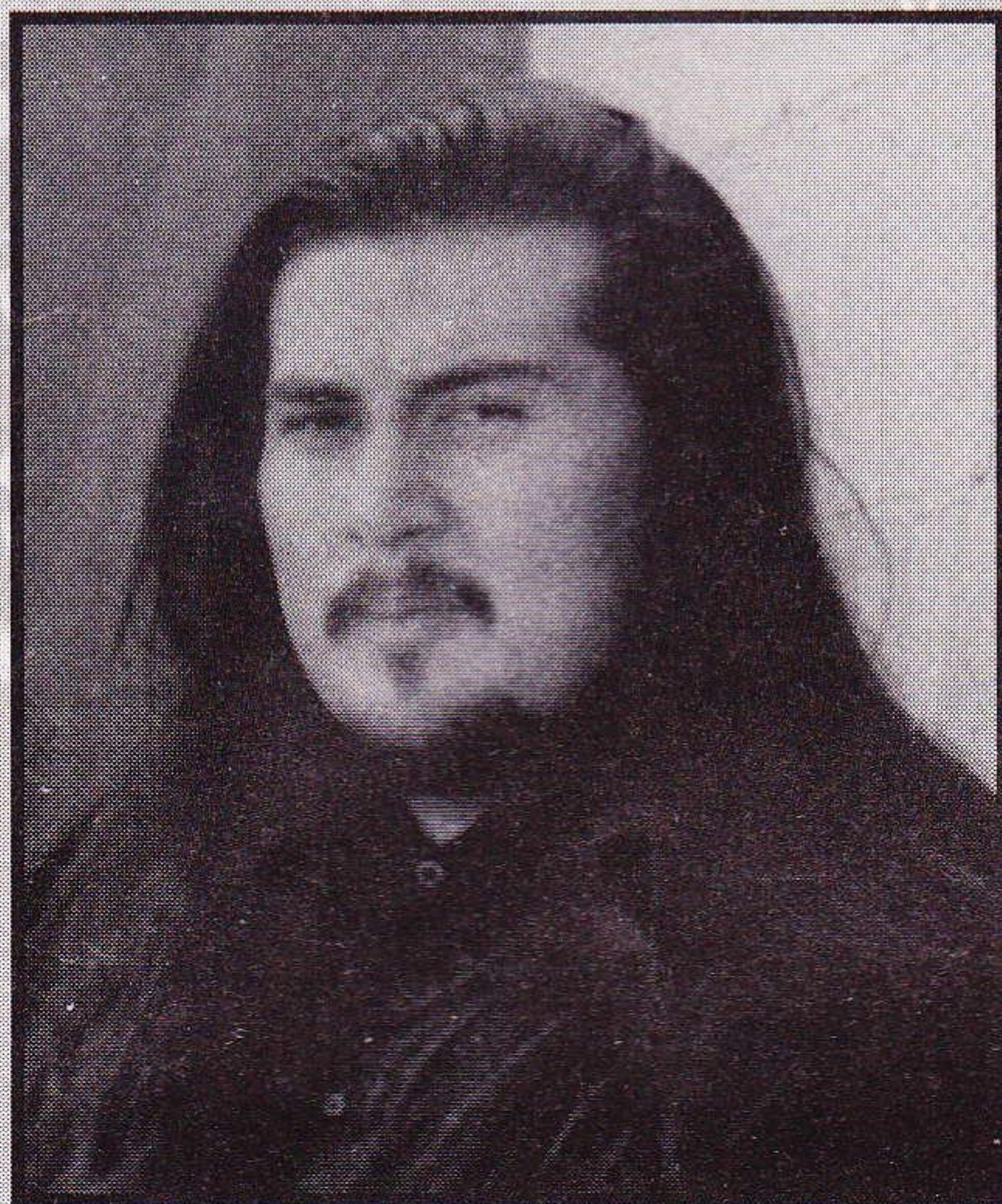
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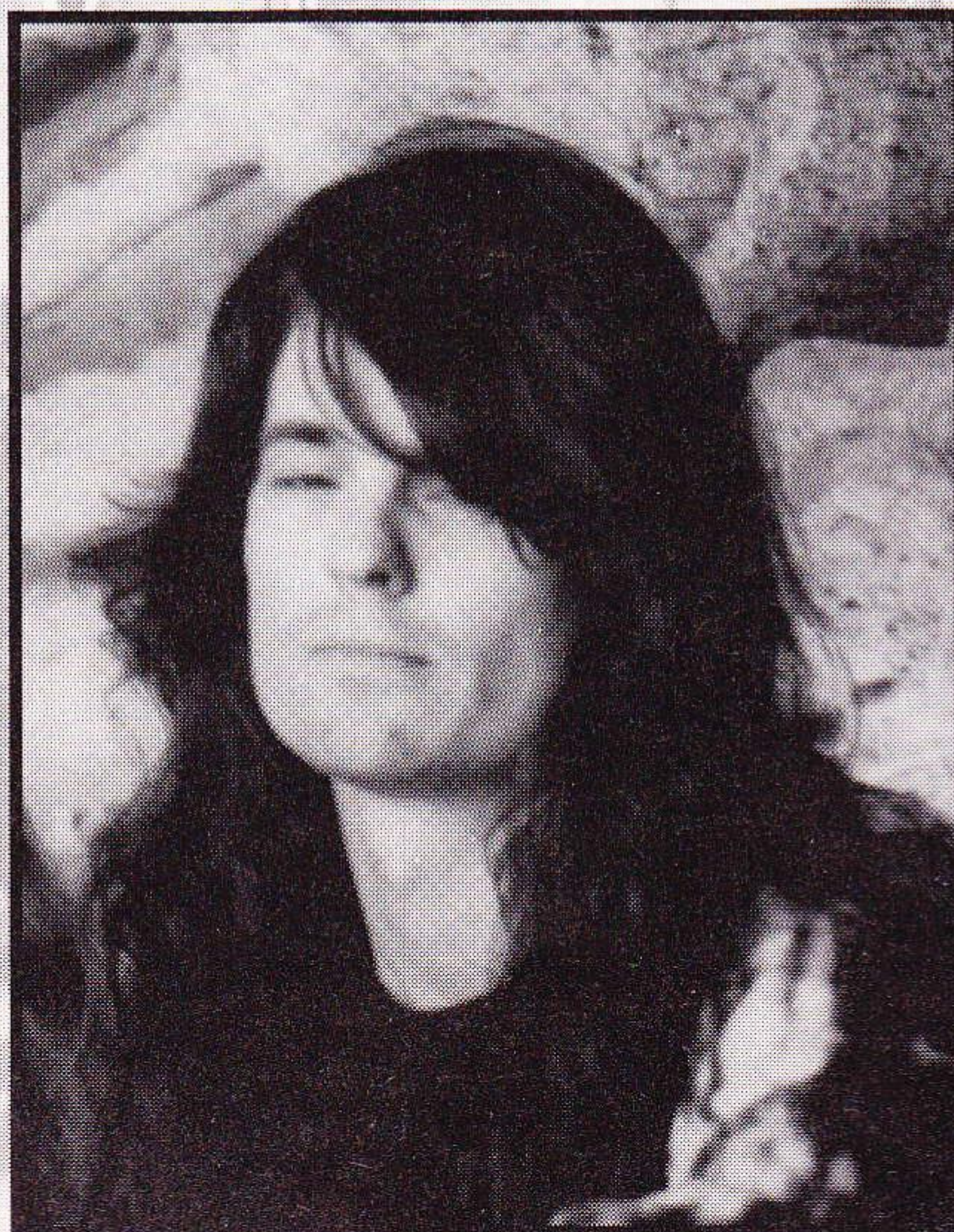


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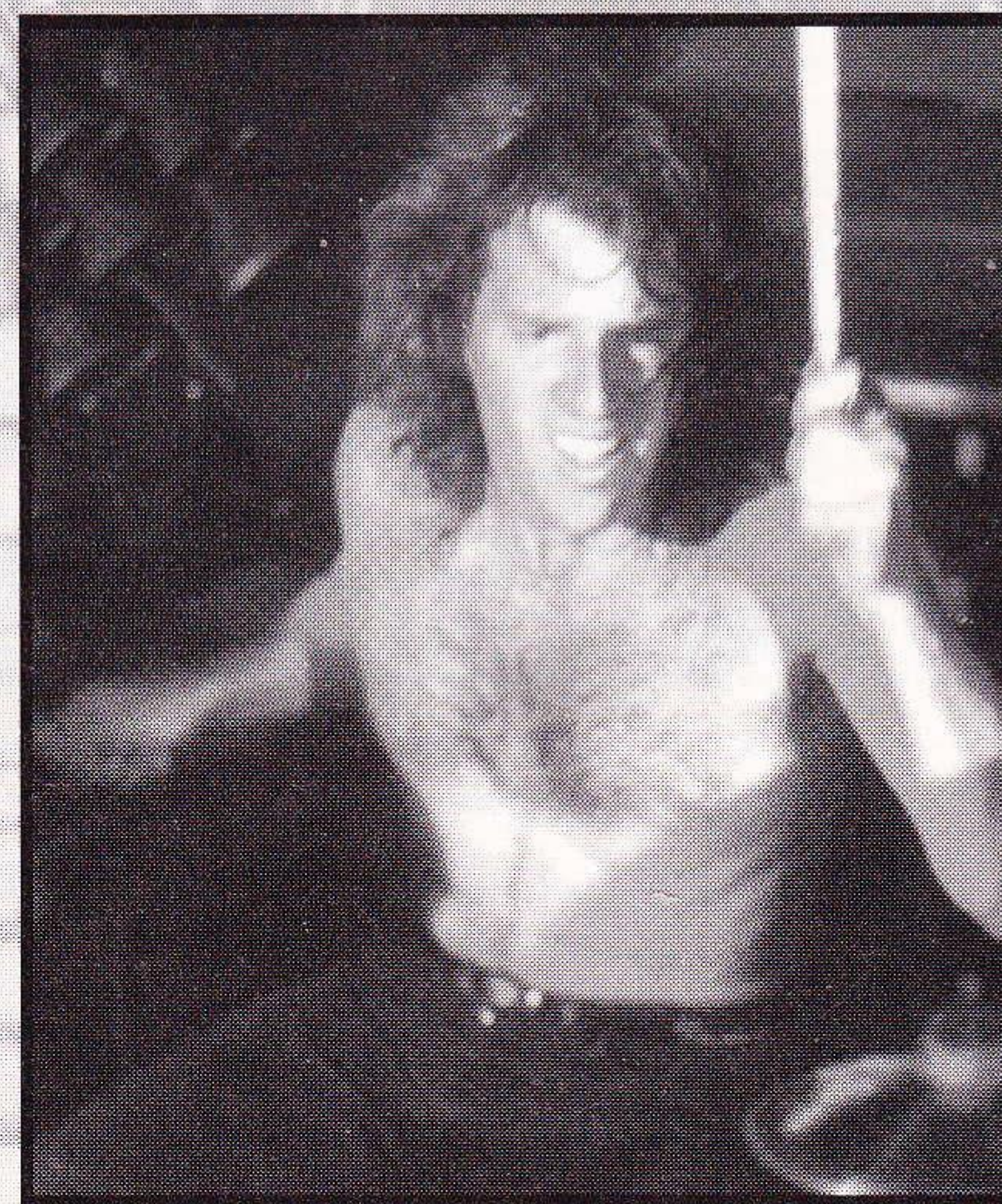
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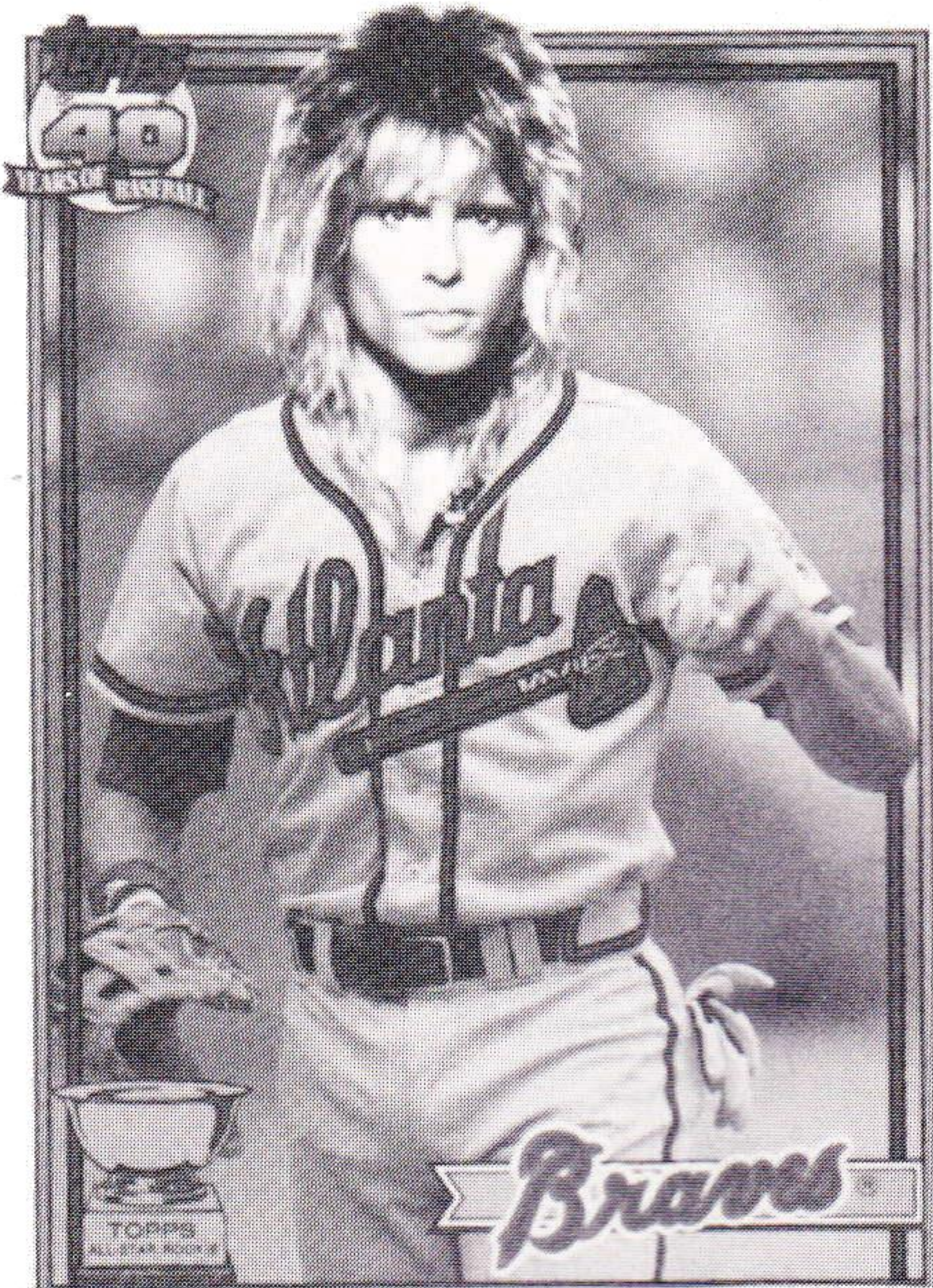
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Inside/Out By David Bach



DAVID BACH

Hey People!

First off! Mucho apologies to all who have looked for this column over the last few months but were denied! (How pompous of me!) Well, Folks, I've been engaged heavily in the process of reaping my own advice lately! Yes! I've been touring!!! I had originally decided that I could no longer write this column due to time restraints, but all of you diligent HM readers have politely dogged me into writing again. I always dreaded the day that we would finish our story, because I swore that I would be truthful and accurate...and face it, dudes, the truth ain't always pretty (Doom music please...)

Well, our dear pals in Tortured Virtue were granted their three dearest wishes and got to go out on tour. What started out as a dream ended 1 month and 22 days later when Biff and Max decided that they were quitting the group. You see, touring had not been anything it was cracked up to be. There were nights when nobody showed up, nights when people came, but the promoter just couldn't seem to pay them, nights when the gig was cancelled and there was nothing to do but keep driving. It was nothing like in the movies (in fact, it was much worse than "Spinal Tap" -- at least Tap slept in hotels).

Biff and Max had hoped that Tortured Virtue would at least be treated

like stars. After all, they were international recording artists. Jimmy was the most bummed about the breakup. He always saw Tortured Virtue as a ministry and was encouraged by the kids who got saved at their shows. Jimmy tried to convince the other guys to stay, but reality had already dealt them a severe tail-kicking.

Ace was not that upset about the end of Tortured Virtue. He knew that his forthcoming (and as yet unrecorded) guitar instrumental solo record would be a smash hit. (He had forgotten that he had been the one to sign for the band's new van and trailer and was responsible for the debt...something his wife quickly reminded him of when he told her of the band's decided demise.)

Is this a crummy ending, or what! (It stinks, but it's realistic) I suppose I should have made it more flowery and funny with all those stupid things I say in this column. Again, I apologize! I had originally told our dear editor, Doug, that I could no longer write this column. I meant it too! But when I got home off this long, long tour, I felt that I had an obligation to everyone who ever read this column to at least say goodbye and offer some parting thoughts (...or is that shots?). So, here I go!

1993 saw the demise of too many good bands. I won't name them, but you know who they are. Why did these bands break up? (They did break up, despite what their record company says.) Because the music business stinks! Some guys God called out of it, others couldn't support their families, and still others could no longer get along with each other (Yes, it happens even in Christian bands!).

I should back this up from personal perspective. For those of you who don't know me, I play bass in a band called Guardian. We are supposedly one of the top dogs in Christian rock. We've been on the cover of lots of magazines and we sell a decent amount of records. We've had #1's of this and that and blah, blah, blah... What is the point? We are as broke as you! (...our record company is going to be bummed that I said that! ie: record companies always like to present a rosy image) I don't say any of this to complain, but rather to educate. I've said this before, but it bears repeating: Nobody twisted our arms and made us sign a record deal! (and our record company is fairer than most)

The problem is that the whole industry system is oppressive to the artist.

The mainstream record industry has always operated this way and the Christian music industry has merely ported it over into Christendom unchanged, with the same hoser contracts and bogus deals that put most bands in an extremely poor climate for sharing the Gospel through music. (Am I being a crybaby? Probably, but I may as well finish my indignant diatribe) The little guys aren't the only ones who get hurt either. I've decided to enclose a quote from Billy Joel (Yes, Virginia, even successful artists hate getting bogged).

So sez Billy: "I'm not against the music business. This business has been my bread and butter and it's bringing up my daughter...but I've become real cynical about the business. There are no moral medals to be handed out in the history of the music business. I've been at awards shows where they will trot out the Drifters and the Coasters, you name it. And all the old record company moustache Petes stand backstage and chuckle about how they ripped these guys off. It's actually a badge of honor to them -- how little they paid them. And they compare stories, like 'What kind of car did you give them?'"

"Well, I gave them a Buick."

"Well, gee, you beat me. I gave them a Cadillac."

In point of fact, none of these guys got a red cent. And unfortunately, that's how the business works. While the record companies, lawyers and managers went on, the artists dried up and disappeared." (*Musician Magazine* - Sept. '93)

Heavy stuff Billy! Is there a solution? Is there a better way? That's right, Folks, don't touch that dial! To be continued...

"A fortune made by a lying tongue is a fleeting vapor and a deadly snare." (Proverbs 21:6)

"Before his downfall a man's heart is proud, but humility comes before honor." (Proverbs 18:12)

"Who can say, 'I have kept my heart pure; I am clean and without sin?'" (Proverb 20:9)

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Ask Wendi...

Dear Wendi,

I would like to ask, not merely for controversy's sake, but for personal reasons, what are your views on suicide, particularly about Christians and suicide? I know I could ask a pastor or teacher, but I don't want to alarm anyone. Answers I have received in the past have seemed incomplete or superficial. Many people believe a person cannot be a Christian and commit suicide. I don't understand why. I can say, without a doubt, that my name is written in the Book of Life, but when depression and loneliness come, suicide does enter my mind as an option. I'm using myself as an example not only because I struggle with this problem, but many young Christians I talk to also feel that life is not worth living and is too painful sometimes. I need an answer for myself and to give to others.

Thanks,
Name Withheld From Georgia

Dear Georgia,

The very fact that you are still asking questions about suicide shows that you are not comfortable with the rationale behind suicide, and have not been able to reconcile it with your Christian faith.

What is at the core of a suicidal wish? Basically, unhappiness about circumstances that you cannot control. Many suicidal individuals are not suffering from mental illness. Studies of hundreds of genuine suicide notes indicate that, although the suicidal person is extremely unhappy, he is not necessarily mentally ill.

At the core of each person is a little tyrant that wants his way and argues that it is not fair when adversity comes his way. Isaiah writes very eloquently concerning this, "Woe to him who quarrels with his Maker, to him who is but a potsherd among the potsherds on the ground. Does the clay say to the potter, 'What are you making?' ...Woe

to him who says to his father, 'What have you begotten?' or to his mother, 'What have you brought to birth?' This is what the Lord says -- the Holy One of Israel, and its Maker: 'Concerning things to come, do you question Me about My children, or give Me orders about the works of My hands? It is I Who made the earth and created mankind upon it. My own hands stretched out the heavens; I marshaled their starry hosts.'" (Isaiah 45:9-12) In Matthew 5:45, Jesus says that His Father "causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."

The Bible says very clearly, "You shall not murder." (Exodus 20:13) Christians unanimously agree with this commandment against murder, but rarely connect it with self-murder or suicide. Nowhere in the Bible can you find a place condoning suicide. Rather, we are told to be patient in affliction (Romans 12:12). We are told that, in this world, we will have troubles, but to trust in Him Who has overcome the world (John 16:33). We as Christians have this hope of our salvation as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure (Hebrews 6:19). We are assured that God will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can bear and that He will provide a way out so that you can stand up under it (1 Corinthians 10:13). We are not like the unbeliever who is without hope, but we as believers have the ultimate hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13 & 18).

I turned to Dr. Norman Geisler and his book, Ethics: Alternatives and Issues for the Christian philosophical answer to the ethics of suicide. He writes, "Of course, the ethical question is not what men are doing, but what they ought to be doing. Hence, the question here is not why men commit suicide, but whether they should do so and when (if ever)." (p. 236) Geisler points out that even, "among atheistic existentialists there is a strong rejection of suicide. 'Suicide,' says Sartre, 'is wrong because it is an act of freedom which destroys all future acts of freedom...' Defining suicide this way points up precisely how irrational the act really is. As such, suicide is an absurd piece of reasoning, for it is the 'reason' which destroys itself in affirming itself. Actually, there is no real reason for suicide. It is an anti-rational act which lacks a true rationale." (p. 237)

Many people who have contemplated or attempted suicide have erroneously believed that suicide was the best way out of their problems. Geisler again argues, "How can the best thing for oneself be the ultimate act against oneself? Suicide is not self-

interest. The only way one can show interest in himself is to preserve himself. Suicide is just the opposite. It is really self-hate." (p. 237) "...men do not attempt suicide, because it is the most reasonable thing to do, but because it is the 'easy' way out of their problem." It is existential "cop-outism." "When someone thinks that the easiest way out of his situation is to attack himself fatally, rather than attacking the problem, then he has a moral, if not a psychological problem... As far as Scriptures are concerned, suicide comes under the prohibition of murder. It is at least as wrong illicitly to take one's own life as it is to take the life of another." (p. 238)

He goes on to say that we are commanded to love ourselves and to love others in Matthew 22:39. It follows that if we love someone we should not murder that someone and if we biblically love ourselves, then suicide is not an option. "Suicide is wrong because it is the murder of a human being made in the image and likeness of God, even if the individual happens to be oneself." (p. 238) Dr. Geisler further points out in a footnote that suicide may be a worse sin than homicide, because it is a violation of self-love, which is the basis for loving others.

I would challenge you to borrow, buy, or check out Ethics: Alternatives and Issues by Norman L. Geisler and read the section on suicide in its entirety.

In closing, I would plead for you to place yourself under the care of a Christian psychologist if your depression and loneliness leads you to ungodly preoccupations with suicide or you continue to suffer from debilitating depression. There are medications that are very effective in combating chemical depressions and as Christians we are mandated to care for ourselves.

We are precious in His sight and were each so cosmically worthwhile that Jesus Christ died for us, so that we could be delivered from sin and death. He has declared us righteous and, as the Apostle Paul writes, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31) Nothing can separate us from God's love. God says, "I will never leave you; never will I forsake you. So we say with confidence, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?'" (Hebrews 13:5b & 6)

In His Love,
Wendi

Drop me a line at: Jesus People USA, Wendi's Column, 920 W. Wilson, Dept. W, Chicago IL 60640; or fax (312) 989-2076.

The Christian & Art

By Kemper B. Crabb II

The Sons of Issachar:
Knowing What Israel Should Do, Part I

In the past couple of issues, we began examining the implications and applications of the Biblical example of the Sons of Issachar for the Christian artist. In 1 Chronicles 12:32, these men are specifically noted for being those "...who understood the times and knew what Israel should do...", their example there forming a two-pronged model for artists (and Christians of any other calling, for that matter) to follow in effectively practicing their vocation before God and the world.

Those two prongs are "understanding the times" and "knowing what Israel should do," which, as we've seen in past issues, equate respectively to (1) understanding our historical and cultural situation so that we can, with good effect, influence our society by our artistry toward obedience to Christ, and (2) knowing Holy Scripture as the Blueprint for what we are to do and believe in the times we live in. Up till now, we've looked primarily at what "understanding the times" means for us, seeing that we are to work to understand the historical development of our culture, so that we can extend Truth to it in ways that it can grasp, and that we are to see our own artistic development in light of the history of our art-form, seeking to better the practice of our art by subjecting it through apprenticeship to those more advanced in its practice (e.g., those better at it than we are). Thus, "understanding the times" is largely about history and traditions.

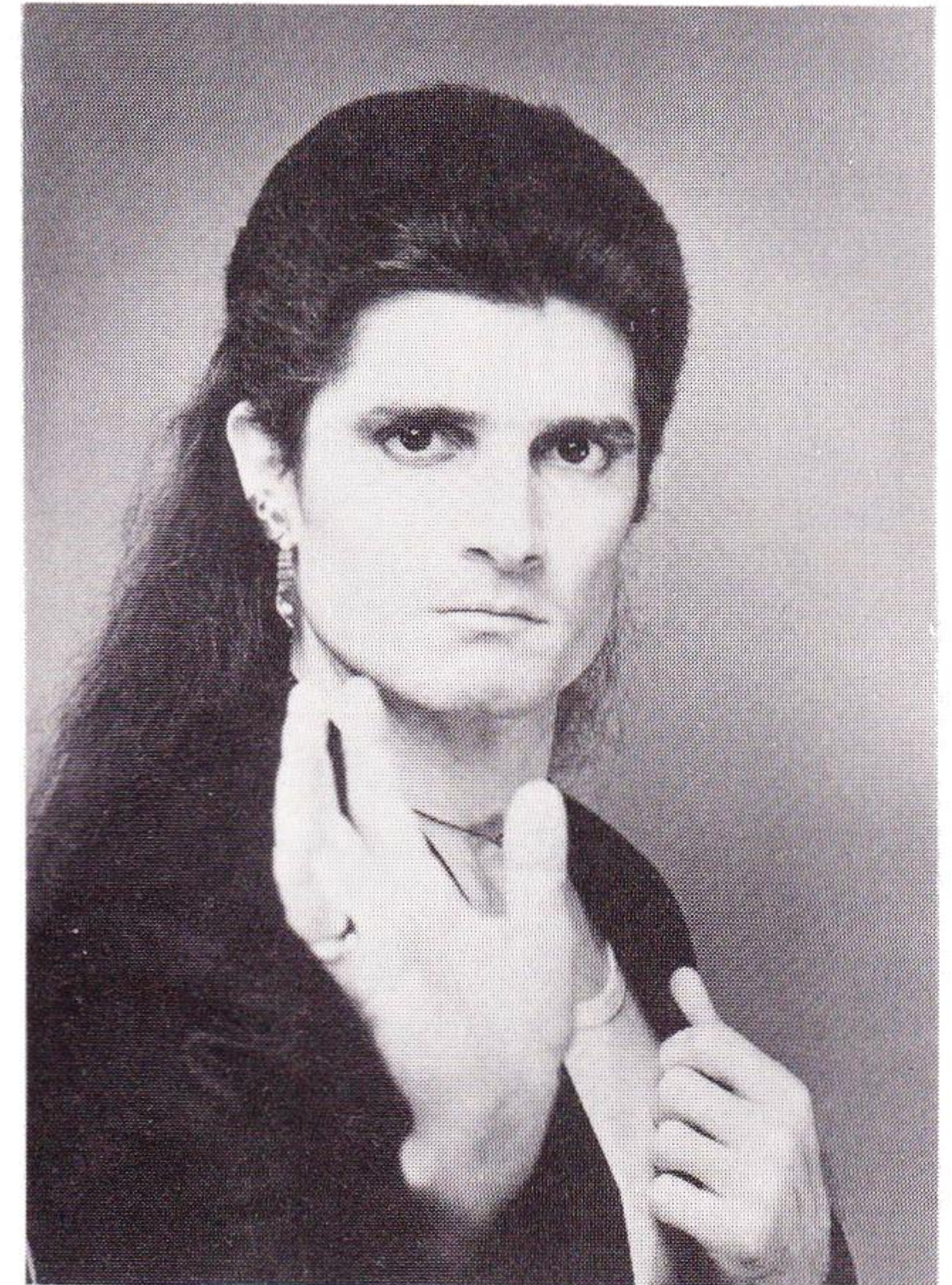
We turn now to a consideration of what the second part of the Issacharians' example, that of "knowing what Israel should do," might mean for Christian artists. Israel, of course, was the holy nation of God's people; and, as the New Testament clearly teaches (Ephesians 2:11-22; Galatians 4:21-31; Romans 2:28-29; Galatians 3:6-9, 26-29; Romans 4:9-16; etc.), the Church is now Israel spiritually. Knowledge of what God's people should do can be based only on the Bible, the Church's only Standard and Infallibly True Guide to faith and duty (Proverbs 29:18; Isaiah 8:20; Galatians 1:8; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; II Timothy 3:16-17, etc.); which is the Light of our path (Psalm 119:105). Scripture, as God's written Word, speaks to the entire spectrum of human experience, providing men with guidance and illumination for every situation humanity

will ever face.

Because God has spoken to us in His Word (II Peter 1:20-21) as the Creator from beyond history, and as the One Who has created our history (Genesis 1:1; Revelation 1:17), His Word will remain forever, though our history will end (Isaiah 40:6-8). This means that, though historical situations change constantly, the Bible's Message remains unchanged and constant, and is applicable to any and all of history's fluctuating periods. This is important, because it shows us that the Message remains the same, though our ways of communicating that Message will change, to some extent, in reflection of current historical cultural development (in other words, the way our culture communicates artistically).

At this point, we must realize that the two prongs of the Sons of Issachar model work in tandem in respect to communicating artistically as Christians. It's obvious from the Scripture that traditions and history are vitally important concerning the artist's task. In point of fact, however, without the Bible's guidance, having an understanding of cultural history is relatively meaningless, much like sailing a ship without a rudder. Tradition is extremely important, but like all human experience, it must be subjected to the Eternal Standards of God's Word. Only those parts of tradition (this includes forms, content, etc.) that are in accord with Scripture's Standards are worthwhile or useful for the Christian (this will leave us with a spectrum of experience and expression that is both wider and narrower than might at first be expected, as we'll see in the future). This truth must never be forgotten as we essay to faithfully perform our calling as Christians, because to depart from this practice is to depart from God's Perfect Blueprint for our lives and callings.

The Bible alone provides us with the necessary eternally true perspectives by which we can judge our fallen history and traditions, rejecting the parts of those that are at odds with God's Holiness, but holding to and building upon that which is in accord with God's Will. This is the path of true Christian progress, artistic or otherwise. In order to "judge not according to appearance, but make a righteous judgement" (John 7:24), we must truly know God's Word, in all of It's Aspects, so that we can "know what Israel should do" in our day in time. **HM**



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TOUR DATES

These dates are booked well in advance, so please check with the numbers listed at the top of each artist's listing for confirmation of the concert. If the mood strikes you, send in your review of the show...it may get printed in Heaven's Metal!

REZ			
3/25-26	Pittsburg PA	412-937-1997	
HARDCORE '94			
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CRASHDOG, THE CLERGY			
4/15	Corpus Christi TX	512-242-3104	
4/19	Oklahoma City OK	405-341-2439	
4/20	Tulsa OK	918-251-8591	
4/22	Atlanta GA	404-319-7064	
4/23	Tampa FL	816-725-2717	
4/29	New York NY	718-296-5536	
5/1	Lancaster PA	215-593-7176	
5/5	Columbus OH	614-575-1322	
5/7	Grand Rapids MI	616-245-4338	
5/13	Milwaukee WI	414-257-2023	
5/14	Aurora IL	708-268-0323	
5/15	Minneapolis MN	612-379-2858	
5/21	Vancouver BC	604-533-9629	
5/22	Seattle WA	206-933-8066	
5/26	Sacramento CA	916-846-0835	
5/28	Phoenix AZ	602-921-8939	
5/29	Tucson AZ	602-629-9211	
5/30	Albuquerque NM	505-881-7711	

FIGHTIN' WORDS...

I just thought I'd write and tell you something interesting. Rob Halford of Judas Priest went solo. And, at the end of the Fight CD there's a song called "Jesus Saves." It's not labelled as a song on the CD credits, but comes on about five minutes after the last song -- "Reality A New Beginning." I'm surprised the record company let him get away with it. Anyway, I thought it would get your attention.

--Brett Goodrich
Cedar Rapids, Iowa

BANG THY HEAD -- NOT!

The subject of my letter has been on my heart for probably the last two months or so, and after praying about whether or not I should even write in (...didn't want to write a discouraging letter...), the Lord brought to memory an article that you had written in HM, way back when, encouraging all of us headbangers to "Worship at lower volume," due to the damaging effects it can have on our hearing. Quite an interesting and informative article, I must say!

Well, I would like to bring another issue of caution to the fore-front, if you don't mind; and I probably wouldn't even be all that concerned, had it not been an "issue" of sorts in my own life. The "issue?" Headbanging. You're probably thinking, "That's a stupid and 'petty' issue to bring up! But hear me out.

I was turned on to Christian metal, like a lot of headbangers, through Stryper, and I have very much enjoyed God's metal for the last 7-8 years. Another thing I became quite fond of was banging my head. It was fun worshipping the Lord with Christian metal, but I thought headbanging was really fun, too. Like moshing, headbanging doesn't really serve a "technical" purpose. It's just something that's fun and enjoyable -- an "active musical expression," basically.

Well, as time went on, I had been given many, many warnings about my "active musical expression," but the warnings always "fell on deaf ears," as they say. I can't tell you how many times my best friend (who also enjoys Christian metal) would urge me to, "be careful and not hurt yourself!" Or, my mom would catch me banging my head around (listening to Stryper or something) and say, "You better be careful doing that!" But I never listened. I thought headbanging was "too cool." I thought I had to be like "everyone else" and, for some stupid reason, I felt as though I had "something to

prove" by banging my head. Now that I look back on it, the only thing I ended up proving was how stupid I was!

After a good five years of bangin' my head, I now have some lasting effects and, believe me, they aren't very fun! My back and my neck (especially) are always out of place and have to be put back in; and severe headaches are a regularity if I even so much as move or turn my head very fast for whatever reason.

Just the other night before going to bed, as a matter of fact, I caught myself headbanging to Betrayal's "Frantic!" (...some habits die HARD!) for not even a minute, but the after-effects lasted much longer! The next morning (Sunday), I was rewarded with a stiff back, an extremely sore neck, and a throbbing headache.

To all of you headbanging brothers and sisters, God's love on ya! Enjoy your "active musical expression," but for your own sake, PLEASE use wisdom! Don't be stupid like I was and be a headbanger, because you think it will "make you look cool" or you've got "something to prove!" Make sure your motives are pure and don't write people off if (and when) they admonish you to be careful. After all, our bodies were meant to be used, NOT abused!

--Paying The Price In Ohio

OUT OF PRINT?

I am very frustrated and disappointed by the Christian music industry. I started listening to Christian music in 1985. I purchased records by the bands and artists such as In 3D, White Heart, Leviticus, Messiah Prophet, Jerusalem, Rick Cua (to name a few) and others over the next few years. I was surprised to find out that these albums are no longer available; they are out of print. This really upsets me. What is the purpose of releasing music if it is only going to be available for two or three years?

I realize the motives of these recording labels is to make money, but I just don't understand why quality Christian music that has attained a certain degree of popularity and success, would become extinct within such a short time span. I am sure many readers can relate to the frustrations of trying to find some of their favorite Christian music on compact disc, only to find out it became OP 10 days after it dropped out of the top 10 sales list. I sometimes wonder if I would have ever gotten hooked on Christian music had I known what a pain it would be to find the music later on CD.

--Alex Grad
Lakewood, Ohio

LETTERS TO SNED?

Since Issue #16 I have been an avid fan of Heaven's Metal Magazine. I have enjoyed seeing the changes from black and white to color, posters in the middle, and many new columns, especially the change in cartoons. I have to admit, you guys have done a lot.

I read every page at least twice, and always find the letters to the editor column distressing. It seems like years now that people constantly complain to you guys about the same things every issue.

All I'm asking is that people stop and look at the whole picture. Half of the arguments they write to you about only blow wind. Proverbs talks a lot about the wise sometimes saying nothing at all. I myself would rather hear instruction rather than destruction.

--Scott Gillard
Batavia, New York

DANIEL BAND SALUTE

This is Roy Salas, Jr., former rhythm guitarist for Paradox. How's it going? I don't think I have ever written to you, but this will be the first time since we broke up. I still keep in close touch with Manuel and Fern. As a matter of fact, I work with Fern. I still play, mostly worship songs at Bible studies or church. I still serve the Lord, but not playing in a metal band. I just bought the tape of the best of the Daniel Band and I just want to say that, if I had never heard of Petra or the Daniel Band and Stryper, I'd probably be listening to Pearl Jam or something. God really used them in my life. The Daniel Band is the most anointed band I've ever heard. I give all the credit to God, of course, but I thank Him for His servants.

I just want to express my deepest appreciation to them for their faith. One day I was listening to the song "In My Mind" and I had a vision. It was a wonderful experience. The same thing happened with the song "Run From The Darkness." It was pretty awesome. I know other people have had similar experiences.

I know the hardships of being on the road, setting up the equipment, being away from our families, it's tough. Now, more than ever, we need more anointed metal bands out there. I tip my hat to all the Christian metal bands that are out right now. May God bless you. Who knows? Maybe Paradox will get back together. Lift each other up in prayer, just like Moses needed help from the brethren to hold up his hands and arms when they went into battle.

--Roy Ralas, San Antonio, Texas

Licks & Tricks by Jeff Scheetz

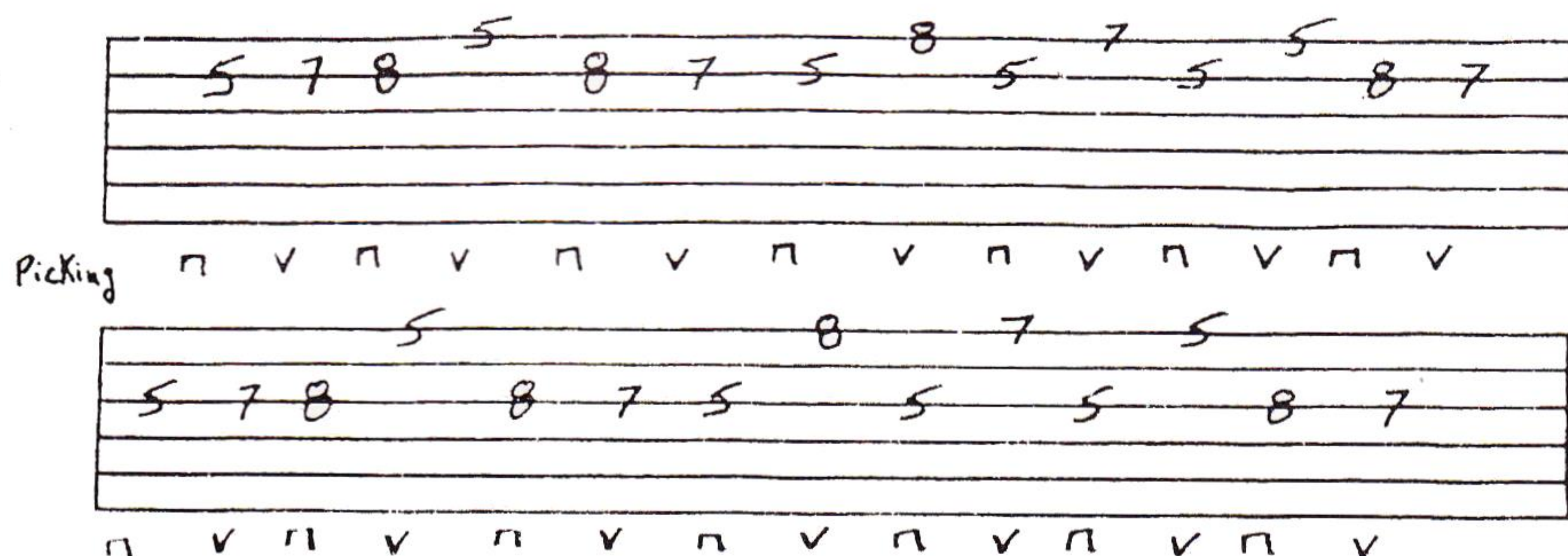


This is another simple picking pattern that has a couple of neat things happening in it. First, it has 28 notes in it. So, what does this mean? Well, it is divisible by 4, so sixteenth notes work great for this. The interesting part of this, however, is that the first line has 14 notes in it and the second line has 14 notes in it. You say, "That's not interesting!" But, it is because the basic pattern is the same for each set of 14 notes (you just are skipping a string on the second line) and this means (that) if you are playing straight 16ths, the first two notes of the second line will actually be the last two notes of the final 16th group from the first line.

Whew! I know, by now you are thinking, "What would possess someone to figure this stuff out?" But, hey! Somebody's got to do it!

Anyway, it is a cool pattern, so try to set your metronome on a slow steady beat and play consistent 16ths. It's a great exercise for your alternate picking, and also an ear teaser on the rhythmic side.

Write Jeff at: PO Box 10135,
Kansas City MO 64111. **HM**



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PASTOR BOB

I awoke suddenly as the house around me began to shake. Things were flying around the room and crashing on the floor. Car alarms and sirens broke the silence. I reminded myself that I should be used to these earthquakes by now -- I've lived in California for 14 years now! Besides, I was moving in a few days! No more earthquakes! God reminded me that natural disasters can happen anywhere! I remembered that I am safe in His hands. But I couldn't help but feel a little small and vulnerable.

As I turned on the news, the reports began to come in telling of the people who died as their apartments and houses came crashing in around them. I wondered if they knew Jesus before they died. Those who were still alive were talking about God a lot now. Some were calling the earthquake "an act of God." Our President was even telling people to pray for the earthquake victims in California. Did he really mean what he was saying? I wondered if he himself prayed.

As I walked out to my car a few hours later, I found a note stuck in my car door. "Hi Pastor Bob. Was this morning a sign from God? Please call me!" Later on, someone informed me that all was not as it seemed. "You know, the big one hasn't hit yet. When the big earthquake comes, a lot of people will die. This was only a wake-up call." He went on to talk about how God was showing His disgust for the state of morality in California. "One of these days, God is going to wipe out all these heathens. They'll see Who's boss!" He went on to explain how this earthquake, now being called "The Great Earthquake of '94," was part of God's wrath on a God-less society. It seemed to be a popular subject as I talked with many more people that day. Is that the way God speaks to us? Does He have to use an earthquake to get our attention? I was reminded of a story in 1 Kings 19 (9-13), where God is dealing with Elijah...

"And the Word of the Lord came to him: 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' He replied, 'I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected Your covenant, broken down Your altars, and put Your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.' The Lord said, 'Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.' Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains

apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave."

God didn't speak in the powerful wind, or the earthquake, or the fire. He spoke in a gentle whisper! I know so many people who are still waiting for God to speak to them. They keep asking Him for signs and wonders to prove He is listening or involved in their lives. God is speaking in that "still small voice," but they are too busy waiting for Him to speak in more unusual ways. People were doing the same thing in Jesus' day, too. There were people who followed Him, watched Him perform miracles, watched Him die on the cross, and rise from the dead. They watched Him ascend into Heaven on a cloud. The Bible tells us that many believed, and some still doubted. They were still saying, "Lord, just one more sign. Just one more miracle. That's all. Just one more -- then we'll *really* believe!" If our belief in God and our relationship with Him were a result of signs and wonders, then everyone would have believed in Jesus as He walked the earth. But the problem is still our hearts. We are still too busy to listen.

The Bible tells us that we will have more earthquakes and natural disasters before Christ comes again. If your ears and eyes are only focused on end-times signs, I'm afraid that you are missing the most important aspect of your Christian life. Make sure you are tuned to His voice. Isaiah 30:21 says, "Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it.'"

Questions? Comments? Write to me!
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A stylized, colorful illustration of a fish, possibly a pufferfish, with a green body, red fins, and purple spots. The fish is shown in profile, facing right, with its mouth open. A large, dark, hand-like shape is superimposed over its side, suggesting a human interaction or a specific anatomical feature.

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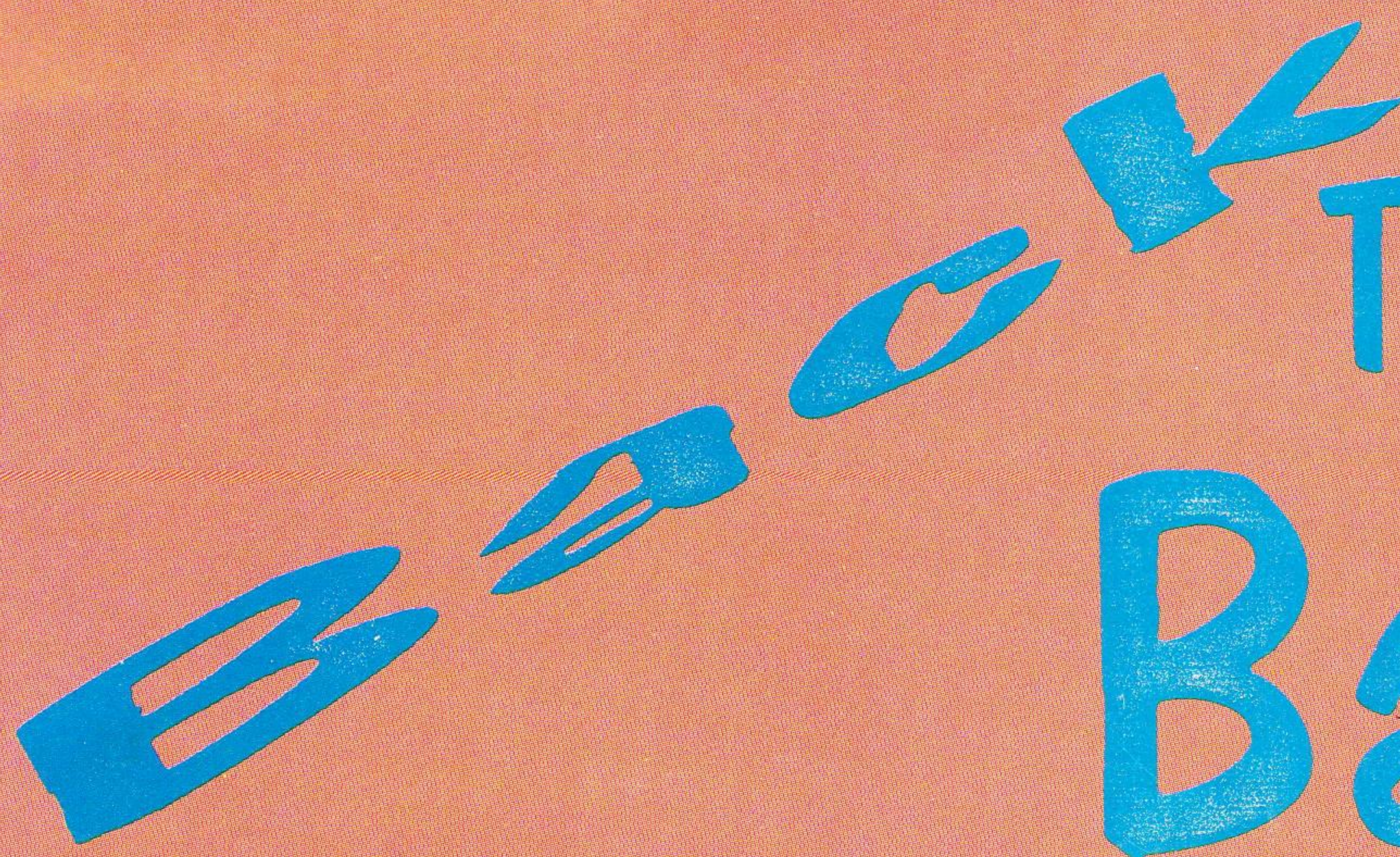
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To The Basics

Some people may make Christianity look complicated or complex, but it's really quite simple. I think God wanted to make it simple so it could be translated into every language and every culture without much fuss. Anyone should be able to apply these principles and be transformed into a saint.

The first basic principle is that there is a God. Unlike the tooth fairy, Easter bunny, Santa Claus or any other fantasy person you were brought up to believe in, God is real. He created all things and rules over the entire universe. This realization alone should cause each one of us to find this God, get to know Him, and thank Him for allowing us to exist. His role as Creator would justify anyone living their entire life in submission and gratitude.

The second basic principle is understanding the difference between us and God. He is God, we are man. He spoke the world into existence; and we can't even speak to the sky and make it rain. He is perfect; we are not. "As for God, His way is perfect; the Word of the Lord is flawless..." (Psalm 18:30) As for man, his way is imperfect and full of flaws. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23) "If we claim we have not sinned, we make Him out to be a liar and His Word has no place in our lives." (1 John 1:10) God has given each of us a conscience, which lets us know that we have done wrong. Because God is so holy, our shortcomings bring us shame in His presence and we cannot go near Him.

God, in His great love for us, has made a way for our sin, shame and shortcomings to be completely forgiven. This is the third most basic principle of Christianity: Even though we have "all fallen short of the glory of God," we are also "justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus." (Romans 3:24)

We have done wrong. We've sinned and we've also been caught. God sees everything and He has seen our sin. We must pay the penalty. The only problem is that the penalty is death. This is God's justice. He will forgive and forget our sins, but He won't ignore them. Our sins bring our punishment upon ourselves, but God has stepped in and made a way for our sins to be forgiven without having to bear the ultimate consequences. God did this by becoming a man.

"Jesus, being in very nature God, did not

consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death -- even death on a cross!" (Philippians 2:5-8)

This is the most remarkable part of Christianity -- that God would become a man! He could have chosen to sit on His throne and destroy us all because of our sin. In an act of great fairness, He came down to earth and dealt with all the pain and suffering that anyone else would go through. We can no longer say of God, "He doesn't know what it's like to be down here!" Now He does! He not only can sympathize with our weaknesses, but He paid the death penalty we deserve for our sin.

His death wasn't a senseless killing. He laid down His life specifically for the reason of paying the penalty for our sins. That's why the word "redemption" is used, because God "paid the price" for our sins. Talk about doing us a favor! He not only took on the pain of death -- He died! His heart stopped beating and His Spirit left His body, just like anyone else who has died. In a glorious work of victory, though, He rose from the dead on the third day. He spent a long time with His friends and followers after He had risen and before He ascended into Heaven. At one point, over 500 people saw His resurrected body at one time. Many of those 500 were alive when the Bible was written, so that people reading and hearing about the resurrection of Jesus could verify the fact by actually going up to an eye witness and hear them testify about seeing Jesus alive after His death.

Once again, let it be known that we're dealing with facts here -- not fantasy. God made His plan of redemption take place with real people in real time and in a verifiable way. Now that we've covered the basics, there is only one more step to be taken; and that is your response. Jesus said that if you would believe in Him, you would have everlasting life. You can have the forgiveness of all your sin and shame if you simply ask God for forgiveness. The basics are all you need: You acknowledge that God is real; acknowledge that you've done wrong and are in need of forgiveness; and believe that Jesus paid the price for your forgiveness and simply ask Him to forgive you. It's that easy! Now do it!